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**Dancing with Scalps: Native North American Women, White Men
and Ritual Violence in the Eighteenth Century**

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MLitt, MA

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Doctor of Philosophy

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Abstract

Native American women played a key role in negotiating relations between settler and Native society, especially through their relationships with white men. Yet they have traditionally languished on the sidelines of Native American and colonial American history, often viewed as subordinate and thus tangential to the key themes of these histories. This dissertation redresses the imbalance by locating women at the centre of a narrative that has been dominated by discourses in masculine aspirations. It explores the variety of relations that developed between men and women of two frontier societies in eighteenth century North America: the Creeks of the Southeast, and the Mi'kmaq of Nova Scotia.

This dissertation complicates existing histories of Native and colonial America by providing a study of Indian culture that, in a reversal of traditional inquiry, asks how Native women categorised and incorporated white people into their physical and spiritual worlds. One method was through ritualised violence and torture of captives. As primary agents of this process women often selected, rejected or adopted men into the tribes, depending on factors that ranged from nationality to religion. Such acts challenged contemporary Euro-American wisdom that ordained a nurturing, auxiliary role for women. However, this thesis shows that 'anomalous' violent behaviours of Indian women were rooted in a femininity inculcated from an early age. In this volatile world, women were not shielded from the horrors of war. Instead, they *became* one of those horrors. Therefore, viewing anomalous actions as central to the analysis provides an understanding of female identities outwith the straitjacket of the Euro-American gender binary.

With violence as a legitimate and natural expression of feminine power, the Indian woman's character was far removed from depictions of the sexualised exotic, self-sacrificing Pocahontas or stoic Sacagawea. The focus on women's violent customs, which embodied several important and unusual manifestations of Native American femininity, reveals a number of jarring behaviours that have found no home within colonial literatures. These behaviours included sanctioned infanticide and abortions, brutal tests for adolescents, scalp dancing and death rites, cannibalism, mercenary wives and sadistic grandmothers. With limited means of incorporating such female characteristics into pre-existing gender categories, the women's acts were historically treated as non-representative of regular Indian lifeways and thus dismissed. Colonial relations are therefore analysed through an alternative lens to accommodate these acts. This allows women to construct their own narrative in a volatile landscape that largely sought to exclude those voices, voices that challenged dominant ideologies on appropriate male-female relations. By constructing a new gender framework I show that violence was a vehicle by which women realised, promoted and reinforced their tribal standing.

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Author's declaration

I declare that, except where explicit reference is made to the contribution of others, this dissertation is the result of my own work. It has not been submitted for any other degree at the University of Glasgow or any other institution.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'H. Donohoe', written over a horizontal line.

Signature _____

Helen Felicity Donohoe

Printed name _____



Map of Native American territories in the eighteenth century

Introduction

After witnessing ritualised torture by Mi'kmaq women of captives in the 1750s, the Abbé Maillard, a Jesuit priest stationed among the Indians of Nova Scotia, said, "If the missionary is wise he will be very careful to say not one word then against these horrors, because not only will he speak in vain, but he will also be in grave danger of suffering the same fate."¹ A little later at the other end of the colonies in the Southeast, another witness compared women's methods of torture to the "Romish inquisition", claiming that victims would have happily welcomed a "merciful tomahawk" than suffer at the hands of such women.²

These descriptions are striking. They stand out from the dominant Indian-white violent narratives in sharp relief, a bewildering spike in an otherwise predictable trajectory of masculine, colonial development where men fought men, and women assumed the status of victims of war, or supporters of heroic spouses and children.³ Furthermore, the descriptions are notable not just for their depictions of women or the violence they enacted, but also for the tone of the accounts, the former suggesting that female ritualised violence was a regular occurrence, the latter concurring and equally disapproving. These incidents of female torture were not anomalous for within these two regions along the Eastern seaboard, multiple Indian groups permitted and encouraged female violence. They took place throughout the eighteenth century among almost all of the major indigenous groups in French (then British) Canada, Colonial America and French Louisiana. The accounts describe torture that ranged from deeply sadistic to brief and merciful. White men saw grief and savagery in the actions, sometimes naked anger, or a demonstration of cold and heartless hatred for the enemy as Indians faced warfare and loss on a regular basis.

The colonisation of the Americas offered many chances to witness indigenous lifestyles, war-making, kinship organisation, socio-political endeavours and gender structures as they came into contact with Euro-American mores. Filtered through the eyes of critical, judgemental and even admiring white observers, native peoples were assigned many characteristics, from savages to noble warriors, blood-thirsty primitives to civilised

¹ Maillard, "Lettre a Madame Drucourt", R. H. Whitehead, *The Old Man Told Us* (), p115.

² James Adair, *The History of the American Indians* (London 1775), p390-1.

³ June Namias, *White Captives, Gender and Ethnicity on the American Frontier* (Chapel Hill 1993).

peoples. Within these competing identities, Indian women occupied a nebulous spot. As tribal council members, women had many opportunities to engage directly with important white men. As sexual partners and wives, they also had access to deeply private spaces of white men, with personal encounters that involved long-term relationships. Surprisingly, rather than offer privileged insights into women's worlds this access offered more confusion than certainty (for the historian) as to the nature of Native American women or what their violent actions represented to them.

Native women's lives were complicated and contradictory, and this dissertation acknowledges these inconsistencies. Like the women themselves, the sources do not allow a surgical cleaving of women's lives into convenient or easily-recognised categories. Instead, the thesis mirrors their worlds – they did not order their social roles into hierarchies in the same manner as Euro-Americans. Instead their roles were inter-dependent: tribal leaders living with modernising grandparents, a 'prostitute' living at home whilst honing her medicine skills perhaps, or a girl managing the house for her hunting parents whilst keeping an appraising eye on the white man with material goods who shows a romantic interest in her. These malleable femininities were hard to see for those who interacted directly with them. Travellers viewing the women in one moment in time took their intellectual snapshots, committed them to paper and thus confined women to clearly defined parameters, even when actions showed that women did not conform to such gender boundaries.

This dissertation has chosen to explore these Indian-white connections through the uses of violence. It focuses on mostly Creek Southeastern Indian women and invites comparisons with the Mi'kmaq women of Nova Scotia. The intention is to draw these two regions at either end of the eastern seaboard into the rich historiography of the middle colony Indian peoples. By identifying common features in the use and purposes of violence, a pattern of female behaviour will emerge that is not necessarily restricted to local custom or a specific Indian nation. Instead it will point to wider concepts of native female identity. I will demonstrate that violence was considered natural to indigenous femininities. It was a thread that bound together the key chapters of their lives, and was deliberately used to shape aspects of their childhood. I will show that the early instructions into appropriate use of violence against enemies shaped principles that governed women's interactions with white and Indian men. These are examined in the forthcoming chapters and include: child-rearing, sexual encounters, sexual violence, choosing husbands, marriages, political decision-making, ritualised torture of enemies, and killing.

These areas of interaction were well documented by colonial observers. Their accounts of Indian women from across the eastern seaboard suggest a wide range of feminine ideals persisted among native peoples. Few of them, however, appeared to match those of Euro-American men who held more idealised views of women. One obituary from 1811 detailed the admirable and desirable qualities of an American woman:

She united an accurate judgement alive to every sensibility for her species, she possessed that great benevolence of character that ever exerts itself for the alleviation of distress. Nothing was more consolatory to her than to wipe the tear from the cheek of affliction, nothing more calculated to tranquilise her mind than a conviction of having performed some charitable deed by which misfortune was stripped of its acrimony. Intercourse & observation peculiarly fitted her for the civilised and enlightened circles. She eminently possessed every qualification that adorns the Female character. In the domestic sphere her conduct was characterized by kindness, virtue and affection, every thought of her heart was for her children, their sufferings were hers, their disappointments hers.⁴

Juxtaposed with the torturing Indian woman, the white ideals so poetically expressed by Mordecai Sheftall Senior raised the moral quality of the white woman above the Indian. Observers attempted to interpret the lives of Indian women through this rosy haze of femininity, presenting a Native American female identity that is hard to comprehend. On the one hand some depictions of native women focused on their violence, whereas others romanticised and idealised Indian women, making their violence all the more incomprehensible. Therefore, the persistence of ritual torture has failed to find a satisfactory home in the historiography, and rather than incorporate these acts of violence into a gendered analysis specific to Indian women, ritual torture remains sidelined. Instead, male actions are prioritised in colonial warfare. However, the accounts of torture clearly indicate that native societies valued ritualised violence, and assigned women particular roles in their society and culture, including violent ones. This dissertation will address the significance of these roles and what they meant for the status of indigenous women.

As a result of the many contradictory accounts regarding Indian women's roles, they have often struggled to find a place in native histories that reflects the purposes behind their

⁴ Mordecai Sheftall Senior, (1784-1856) 1811. p. 275-276. Keith Read Manuscript Collection MS 921, Hargrett Rare Books and Manuscript Collection, University of Georgia.

lifestyles and choices. However, historiography has made significant headway in rebalancing that narrative. Indian men and women have been repositioned as nuanced characters and as a result, women emerge as more complex beings. Historians and gender theorists have skilfully drawn out these Indian female experiences to align them more coherently alongside their male compatriots. The work of Joan Kelly and Joan Wallach Scott provided a conceptual framework that challenged gender binaries, gender-assigned characteristics, the simplistic divisions of society into two groups (male and female) and biological essentialism that had previously underpinned understandings of women's social roles. The feminist theory of redefining women and sex roles provided clear correlations with historical constructions of indigenous peoples: the division of two realms, simplistic devices to attach character and traits, and the consequent legitimisation of subordination and domination.⁵ The intellectual efforts to "transform disciplinary paradigms" articulated a fresh way of examining Indian women *and* their cultures. Kathleen Brown championed a repositioning of "gender frontiers" as a means of revisiting ideas of colonial encounter. Crucial to this thesis, she placed religion as central to colonial understandings of 'natural behaviour'.⁶ The work of Dan Richter, Greg Dowd, Peter Mancall, Greg Waselkov and Daniel Usner have produced incredibly vibrant and nuanced interpretations of Indian lifeways incorporating the roles of women alongside the analyses of men that feature prominently in the sources. Refocusing the lens to examine women, Theda Perdue's outstanding research on Cherokee woman has demonstrated a rich and multi-dimensional aspect to Indian women lives and roles.⁷ Much of Perdue's findings were reinforced and supported by recent work on the Choctaw by Michelene Pesantubbee. Her book emphasised the importance of agricultural work to the status of the matriline and the reasons behind its subsequent decline in the middle of the eighteenth century. Both works demonstrated some similarities in the experience of Southeastern women, and reinforced changes observed among the Creeks.⁸ Ann Little's study of New England Indian-white interactions pushed further, allowing gender to shape the exploration of settlers and

⁵ Joan W. Scott, 'Gender: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis' *The American Historical Review*, Vol. 91, No. 5 (Dec., 1986), pp. 1053-1075; Kelly, J., *Women, History, and Theory: The Essays of Joan Kelly* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press 1986), p52-53.

⁶ Kathleen M. Brown, 'Brave New Worlds: Women's and Gender History', *The William and Mary Quarterly*, Third Series, Vol. 50, No. 2, Early American History: Its Past and Future (Apr., 1993), pp. 311-328.

⁷ Theda Perdue, *Slavery and the Evolution of Cherokee Society, 1540-1866* (Tennessee 1979); *Cherokee Women, Gender, Culture and Change, 1700-1835* (Lincoln, London: University of Nebraska Press, 1998); *Sifters, Native American Women's Lives* (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 2001).

⁸ Michelene E. Pesantubbee, *Choctaw Women in a Chaotic World: The Clash of Cultures in the Colonial Southeast* (Albuquerque, University of New Mexico Press 2005).

Indians.⁹ Susan Sleeper Smith's research examined the relationships of Great Lakes Indian women, highlighting the role of interactions with traders and the effects on native identities, as did Jennifer Brown in her study of the Hudson's Bay men and their resourceful Indian wives. Kathryn Holland Braund emphasised how trade and economics functioned in Creek women's lives, where other historians such as Paula Gunn Allen continue to drive gendered analysis of contemporary Indian people in their studies.¹⁰ Gunlög Fur's recent work on the Lenape focused specifically on women and elicited complex ideas of gender using Swedish sources of the Moravian missionaries.¹¹ Gail MacLeitch also repositioned women and gender at the centre of the Early American narrative in her work on the Iroquois.¹² Other modern studies of Indian women have included work by Juliana Barr whose research, although not directly related to the Southeastern Indians, offered interesting perspectives on indigenous experiences, demonstrating that settlers (French and Spanish) were often made to accommodate Indian customs rather than easily impose their own. More notably, she places women in a fundamental position in diplomatic relationships, and emphasises the 'peace' roles that allowed them to manoeuvre within the political landscape as mediators.¹³ Anthropologists Lisa Frink, Gregory Reinhardt and Rita Shepard add to the repertoire of interpretative materials offering perspectives on northern indigenous peoples.¹⁴ And in many ways a forerunner to them all, ethnohistorian James Axtell brought new perspectives to women's lives, offering them parallel status to men in many of his analyses and allowing women room to expand in presence and express themselves in the literature.¹⁵

Despite these extensive forays into the historical literature, it has remained difficult to explain the ritual violence of Indian women. Without a radical restructuring of gender analysis, female death rites can only be consigned to the 'anomaly' category, or be awkwardly shoe-horned somewhere into the narrative. Essentially, the type of violence

⁹ Ann M. Little, *Abraham in Arms* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007).

¹⁰ Kathryn E. Holland Braund, *Deerskins and Duffels: The Creek Indian Trade with Anglo-America, 1685-1815* (University of Nebraska Press, 1993); Paula Gunn Allen, *The Sacred Hoop, Recovering the Feminine in American Indian Traditions* (Boston, 1992).

¹¹ Gunlög Fur, *A Nation of Women, Gender and Colonial Encounters Among the Delaware* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2009).

¹² Gail D. MacLeitch, *Imperial Entanglements, Iroquois Change and Persistence on the Frontiers of Empire* (Philadelphia, 2011).

¹³ Juliana Barr, *Peace Came in the Form of a Woman: Indians and Spaniards in the Texas Borderlands* (University of North Carolina Press 2007).

¹⁴ Lisa Frink, Rita S. Shepard, Gregory A. Reinhardt (eds) *Many Faces of Gender, Roles and Relationships Through Time in Indigenous Northern Communities* (University of Colorado Press 2002).

¹⁵ James Axtell, *The Indian Peoples of Eastern America, A Documentary History of the Sexes* (New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981); *After Columbus, Essays in the Ethnohistory of Colonial North America* (New York 1988).

explored in this thesis does not fit any current conceptions of femininity or womanhood. The eighteenth century construction of Western feminine values that permeated white perceptions of Indian women became a severe impediment to analysis of the sources. These perceptions relied on positioning women in such a way as to emphasise or reinforce masculinities. At the same time, sources on Indian men and women both referred to Indian cosmological belief systems without offering much more insight beyond a cursory acknowledgement of their existence. However, if women were assigned key roles in death rites, it naturally followed that religion could have played a significant role in determining key aspects of the Indian feminine 'ideal'.¹⁶ The sources, therefore, reveal many tantalising glimpses into the possibility that the self-perception of Indian women was very different to white expectations of women. But without the written word of Indian women, it is white perceptions that dominate the literature. As a result, the Indian woman appeared (to this author) as insubstantial and rather confusing: even with excellent current scholarship, she simply did not fit many of the gender ideals. My conclusion was that the "gender map" had failed to sufficiently explain the violent behaviour of Indian women.¹⁷

Analysis of the existing sources reveals that when the Abbé Maillard and others like him were permitted the rare glimpse into female worlds, these women spoke not with written words but with powerful deeds and actions – and reading those actions reveals women who viewed *themselves* as powerful, respected and worthy of obedience. My intention in this thesis is not to reinterpret (male-authored) sources simply to give a higher historical profile to women but to attempt to hear their voices through the "white noise" of colonial sources. These sources pertaining to indigenous people are primarily focused on control of Indians and include documents concerning religious conversions, trade and economics, land cessions, Indian marriages, political manoeuvrings, peace treaties and numerous other aspects of warfare. Emphasising the socio-sexual backgrounds of European men who produced such sources, Kathleen Brown states that their writings reflected "changes in gender relations that were already being transformed by religious reformation and the rise of European markets." With these factors in mind, this dissertation depends a great deal on the writings of a handful of travellers and observers who lived among Indians, some spending time with women."¹⁸ It includes tales from John Lawson's accounts at the start of the eighteenth century to Benjamin Hawkins's mission among the Creeks at the end. James

¹⁶ See Pesantubbee, *Choctaw Women in a Chaotic World*, chapter 6.

¹⁷ A detailed discussion of the gender map and its purpose is presented in Chapter 1 of this thesis.

¹⁸ Kathleen M. Brown, 'Brave New Worlds: Women's and Gender History', *The William and Mary Quarterly*, Third Series, Vol. 50, No. 2, Early American History: Its Past and Future (Apr., 1993), pp. 311-328.

Adair, Louis le Clerc Milfort and William Bartram chart their experiences in the Southeast, while the Abbé Maillard and the Abbé Le Loutre's records make up a portion of the Mi'kmaq study. The rest of the analysis is supported by smaller accounts, journals, diaries and examples from captives, traders and colonial officials. The son of a physician, John Lawson's explorations took him to the present-day North Carolina in 1700, where he travelled inland with a group of five other Englishmen. Helping to establish the town of Bath, he encountered the Congaree, Santee, Esaw and Catawba Indians before dying at the hands of the Tuscaroras. As an educated man his accounts were well-observed with vibrant descriptions.¹⁹ Pierre Antoine Simon Maillard and his protégé Jean-Louis Le Loutre were both Catholic priests and Frenchmen. Charged with the mission to the Mi'kmaq, Maillard arrived in Acadia some time in 1734 followed by Le Loutre in 1737. Being stationed amidst the Indians, between them Le Loutre and Maillard amassed a deep knowledge of the Mi'kmaq belief systems, speeches and war practices, with Maillard creating a French-Mi'kmaq dictionary. Maillard eventually assisted the British in trying to quell Indian attacks. In contrast, Le Loutre's agitation of the Indians against the British presence in Acadia, compounded by his impudent and evasive nature, caused endless headaches for Governor Cornwallis mid-century.²⁰ Less challenging was their countryman, Louis le Clerc Milfort who emigrated to the colonies in 1775. His memoirs revealed much about the Creeks with whom he spent around 20 years, and although appearing to elevate his military prowess and connections to the powerful Chief Alexander McGillivray, he comments on many interesting facets of women's lives, including his unexpected marriage to the chief's sister.²¹

Other key materials include the writings of naturalist William Bartram, a valuable source on the Creeks, Cherokees and Seminoles. A Quaker and Philadelphian, after the Seven Years' War had ended Bartram embarked on an expedition that included South Carolina, Georgia and Florida. In addition to the Indians he spent time with successful traders, allowing insights into the men who married Indian women. Bartram's travels concluded around 1778 and his love of Florida was reflected in his open approach to Indian

¹⁹ Charles R. Holloman in W. S. Powell, *Dictionary of North Carolina Biography Vol. 4* (University of North Carolina Press 1991).

²⁰ Maillard: Micheline D. Johnson, "Maillard, Pierre" in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, Vol. 3 (University of Toronto 2003); A. J. B. Johnston, *Endgame 1758, The Promise of Glory and the Despair of Louisbourg's Last Decade* (Nova Scotia 2007), p37-38, 160-163; Le Loutre: Gérard Finn, "Le Loutre, Jean-Louis," in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, Vol. 4 (University of Toronto 2003); Johnston, *The Promise of Glory*, p159-160; J. G. Reid et. al. (eds), *The 'Conquest' of Acadia, 1710, Imperial, Colonial and Aboriginal Constructions* (Toronto 2004), p176.

²¹ Louis Le Clerc Milfort, *Memoirs or a Quick Glance at my Various Travels and my Sojourn in the Creek Nation*, (Paris: 1802), John Francis McDermott (ed), pxix-l.

customs.²² Irishman James Adair's weighty *History of the American Indians* is a comprehensive account based on the decades he spent among the Southeastern peoples. Most of his observations centre on the Chickasaw, with whom he first traded in 1744, with an extraordinary range of detail on language, wars, towns, meetings, ceremonies and much more.²³ Benjamin Hawkins appears as a key figure in Southeastern lives at the conclusion of the century. In 1796 at the behest of George Washington, he was charged with persuading Indians to convert to more sedentary, farming lifestyles. Not surprisingly, the purpose of his mission casts a paternal hue over his diaries and letters. Nonetheless, in this endeavour Hawkins recorded detailed conversations with Indian women regarding their lifestyles, economic situation, husbands and their resentments.²⁴ American, French, Irish and English, through the eyes of these men the similarities and variations in Indian customs and beliefs are viewed, recording the effects of trade, economics and warfare on women's lives.

Warfare was an intrinsic part of women's lives but I do not believe they framed their femininities by warfare any more than contemporary women determine their particular forms of femininity by current world events. Furthermore, a large question mark hangs over the idea of whether women fashioned new identities as a result of warfare and treaties or colonial law. This seems to be conventional wisdom but I assert that women did not simply swap one identity for another depending on circumstance – the greater picture was too complex for such a straightforward assertion.²⁵ The grouping of women into a handful of convenient categories fails when it comes to a discussion of Indian women and is far from a candid picture of their worlds. The evidence points to many changes, yes, but over a long period of time, where fresh ideas of womanhood were altered and added to the gender repertoire. They were mothers and they cared about their children – but they also killed their own – and other – children. They were grandparents but also strong commanders; they were poor and they were wealthy, they were young and westernised, and they were old and westernised. They were advisors, slaves and slave-owners, tribal elders and

²² G. A. Waselkov & K. E. Holland Braund (eds) *William Bartram on the Southeastern Indians* (Lincoln, London: University of Nebraska Press, 1995), Chapter 1.

²³ T. Hatley, *The Dividing Paths: Cherokees and South Carolinians through the era of Revolution*, Epilogue (1993); James Adair, *History of the American Indians* (London 1775), pii-vii-ix.

²⁴ Thomas H. Foster (ed), *The Collected Works of Benjamin Hawkins, 1796-1810* (Tuscaloosa, London: The University of Alabama Press, 2003), Introduction. See also Merritt B. Pound, *Benjamin Hawkins, Indian Agent* (University of Georgia Press).

²⁵ A confident assertion may be made for a localised group of women. Some historians such as Kathryn Holland Braund suggest that Creek women adapted to accommodate change on North American frontiers. Others such as Susan Sleeper Smith depict Great Lakes women as adopting 'civilised' white gender values in order to best meet the challenges of colonisation. Theda Perdue demonstrates a combination of the two. The overall picture is less clear-cut as women operated both with individual interests at heart whilst also acting on behalf of the community or town.

leaders, medicine women, trading girls, traders, farmers, builders, mothers, politicians and war leaders: sometimes several of these at once. These roles would certainly have been affected by larger colonial events and women often found a bigger stage for performance in those periods. Similarly, customs that permitted a wide range of female behaviours allowed their roles to ebb and flow, expand and contract according to requirement. Therefore this dissertation examines women's actions at a particular moment in time, and attempts to explain those behaviours in terms of tradition and circumstance, in addition to (or instead of) colonial events. This is not intended to undermine current scholarship but seeks to expose several assumptions that have become the bedrock of understandings of native women's identities in colonial history, and to re-engage with the sources to resolve some tensions within the narrative.

In this thesis I suggest that there was complementarity in socially-designed female violence and peacemaking – female violence not as an opposing force of peacemaking but a component of it.²⁶ It was a violence not performed as reactionary, uncontrolled passions. Instead it was organised, methodical and contained the same elements of justified logic as that displayed in male violence, also designed to achieve a specific objective.²⁷ Therefore, my task with this study was threefold. The first step was to construct a gendered identity that could best accommodate violent actions in a meaningful or logical way. Working on the premise that societies constructed gendered identities to best meet their social and kinship needs, my aim was to find a gendered identity (or feminine 'ideal') that best accommodated the type of violence witnessed in the sources.²⁸ The second task was to take accounts of violent acts and death rites, and find common characteristics that could identify them as a pattern of behaviour rather than a collection of random anomalies. The third goal was to give meaning to the acts and allow them a prioritised place in the gendered analysis. In other words, I used violence to act as a distorting lens to view womanhood. By creating a perceptive shift, other apparently unnatural acts of violence can assume a place of significance and follow a logical pattern.²⁹ Finally, I chose to study these women not just through the prism of violence, but also how that violence affected their

²⁶ See Gunlög Fur, *A Nation of Women*.

²⁷ Jean B., Elstain *Women and War* (New York 1987); Philomena Goodman, *Women, Sexuality and War* (Hampshire 2002). These gender theorists posit that historically men's acts of violence were afforded a moral and logical status as opposed to women's inherently illogical and emotional states of being. Male outranked female as their actions were based in reason.

²⁸ Gunlög Fur presents very specific ideas of gendered identity and its relationship to the sexes. Like Theda Perdue, she illustrates that gender ideals could be accommodated and performed by both sexes.

²⁹ Kathleen M. Brown states that historians can challenge what is 'natural' by avoiding essentialism. Brown, 'Women's and Gender History', p317, 328.

relations with the white men who acted in multiple roles as husbands, lovers, rapists, fathers, religious mentors and killers.

The thesis spans most of the eighteenth century beginning with the British conquest of Acadia (Nova Scotia) in 1710, and the British establishment of Georgia under General Oglethorpe in the early 1730s. In this sense much of the material concerns British interactions with both native groups of the regions: the Creeks in the Southeast and the Mi'kmaq in Acadia. However, there is emphasis on the Seven Years' War period mid-century, from 1756-63, when much material was generated. Warfare often brought new men into an Indian town either as captives or allies, and their experiences of women are illuminating. The materials consist primarily of such narratives but also religious texts, captivity tales and travellers' accounts written by traders and visitors among Indians – anyone who had semi-extended contact with tribes and nations. Each one carried its own set of biases and perspectives: a captive had far different opinions on the behaviour of Indian women than the white husband of an Indian woman. Likewise, a priest seeking a Catholic convert measured female attributes and worth differently to a trader seeking a temporary wife who sometimes preferred less 'virtue'.³⁰ Post American Revolution, the sources for this study become less balanced as Americans established their own Indian policies and the British consolidated their relations with the Mi'kmaq. In this period of relative peace, different sources were generated as Americans attempted to find some method of assimilating native peoples satisfactorily within the New Republic. The men who travelled among Indians therefore had a vested interest in maintaining peace as they viewed women, but carried with them a greater mindset of control and compliance in their overall views of indigenous populations, which was reflected in their writings. British and American approaches to Indians diverge considerably here but the implications for women are kept to the forefront in my analysis of their behaviour throughout these events.

The balance of materials comes from the men who were present and curious about the women they interacted with. The Mi'kmaq English language resources from the mid eighteenth century are abundant in the colonial literature. However, the extent of the British relations with women was limited and fraught with potential problems as intense hostilities prevented free and easy exchange. Conversely, the French, ejected from Nova Scotia, had fewer interactions with Indian women in this period and were unlikely to be

³⁰ John Lawson, *A New Voyage to Carolina, Containing the Exact Description and Natural History of That Country: Together with the Present State Thereof* (London 1709), p40. He describes such a marriage where his companion had a "great Mind for an Indian Lass, for his Bed-Fellow that Night".

living among them in any case, but the Jesuits fill some of this gap producing literature on the Mi'kmaq with whom they had extensive relations. The abundance of English-speaking travellers' accounts in the Southeast provides some kind of parity in the sources. Although the Jesuits were perhaps more moralistic in their interpretations of Indian women in the North East, many Euro-American men who came into contact with native women in the Southeast shared similar values, which helps bridge the religious-secular divide. Nonetheless, for the purposes of this thesis the Mi'kmaq perform a reflective role in the analysis of women rather than act as the core group. The comparative approach has greatly enhanced the thesis despite the obstacles. By necessity, and guided by the bias in favour of Creek materials, discussion focuses more on Creek women but Mi'kmaq women are incorporated into this to illuminate vital aspects of Creek and Mi'kmaq women. Therefore, each nation's women pose intriguing questions to each other and provide counterpoints especially where there is a clear divergence in constructions of femininity.

The Creeks and Mi'kmaq offer several points of difference: geography, kinship systems, migration patterns and food procurement. The Mi'kmaq of Nova Scotia, located in the far Northeast, lived primarily among heavily wooded areas and waterways although Mi'kmaq territory expanded into New Brunswick (see map). Canoes were a key means of transport, and the silver birch woods offered sufficient fuel in extremely cold winters. As a patrilineal hunter-gatherer society, men were absent for a significant part of the year and travelled west towards present-day New Brunswick to the hunting grounds. Women gathered other foodstuffs and trapped small game and after hunting season, men and women then worked along the coasts, fishing and trapping. The skills and abilities of both sexes were crucial for establishing tribal worth and often determined status. For the most part, the population was mobile and lived in wigwams in familial groups or small villages, and all gathered each summer at Bedford Basin near Halifax. Trading in furs was carried out with the French and Acadians, and marriages between Indian women and French men were common, which perhaps balanced the relatively low Mi'kmaq population count.³¹ The patrilineal structure

³¹ Population figures for mobile or intermarried couple are difficult to assess. See *Jennifer Reid, Myth, Symbol and Colonial Encounter: British and Mi'kmaq in Acadia, 1700-1867*, (Ottawa 1999), p55, 77, 109. Virginia P. Miller, 'Aboriginal Micmac Population: A Review of the Evidence', *Ethnohistory*, Vol. 23, No. 2 (Spring, 1976), pp. 117-127; Sherburne F. Cook, 'Interracial Warfare and Population Decline among the New England Indians', *Ethnohistory*, Vol. 20, No. 1. (Winter, 1973), pp. 1-24. For descriptions of Mi'kmaq culture and land see Chute, J. E., Speck F. G., "Frank G. Speck's Contributions to the Understanding of Mi'kmaq Land Use, Leadership, and Land Management", *Ethnohistory*, Vol. 46, No. 3 (Summer 1999); John G. Reid, 'Pax Britannica or Pax Indigena? Planter Nova Scotia (1760-1782) and Competing Strategies of Pacification', *The Canadian Historical Review* 85, 4, (December 2004), pp669-683; Gonzalez E. B., "An Ethnohistorical Analysis of Micmac Male and Female Roles", *Ethnohistory*, Vol. 29, No. 2 (Spring 1982).

of the Mi'kmaq certainly allowed an easier transition into male-dominated households, where married women moved to the husband's clan leaving her old village behind. The natural limitations of the Nova Scotia Mi'kmaq borders permitted a relatively stable, yet fragile, culture due to limits on inter-ethnic contacts.

In contrast, their Creek counterparts in the Southeast enjoyed wide, expanding borders that allowed extensive interactions with (and absorption of) other indigenous groups. They remained inland traders (except for coastal dwelling related groups who also fished). Women farmed the land and as a result, towns remained in one place for many years, growing in size and offering social stability as well as flexibility. Early images of the Southeast show a lush, wooded landscape that provided an abundance of game, fruits and vegetables, and access to colonial traders. Men hunted over the winter season but as women were primary food producers, they occupied a place of unique importance. As a result, women were central to Southeastern Indian worlds. Matrilineal and matrilocal, men joined the households of wives, their primary responsibilities to blood relatives through the matriline. Consequently a man was responsible for rearing his sister's children with little influence over biological offspring. With such flexible borders and socio-cultural boundaries, the Creeks became accustomed to change and intermarriage with other peoples, indigenous and white.

One further point of difference includes the use of "peace" or "white" towns in the Southeast, and "red" or "war" towns. James Adair claimed that almost every Indian nation had one of each. The white towns, "peaceable" "ancient" or "holy", were also known as "Mother" towns and were subsequently designated as female in nature. It was forbidden to spill blood in such towns and in theory no-one could be put to death there – not even enemies.³² In white towns debates were held on matters of importance to the nation, where "bloody" or "red" towns hosted deliberations of war and killing of captives. Although "white" and "peace" were synonymous with female, this did not restrict peaceable actions or intent to the sexed body, but to both men and women. Of course, women often functioned as peace intermediaries, but as I will demonstrate, peace could be sought through violent means. In the case of female ritual torture, peace was achieved via death. For the mobile Mi'kmaq such defined diplomatic spaces would have been difficult to maintain. Instead they operated regular meeting points at traditional geographic locations such as Chegoggin (great / chief encampment), Chebucto (chief harbour), Malagash (place

³² Adair, *History*, p159.

of play / mocking), or Tulukaddy (place of residence) and so on.³³ In this dissertation, the scope for comparison between two such vibrant peoples provides a rich field for the study of indigenous women. Often meeting similar challenges such as the influx of white men into their territories, colonial wars, marriage, motherhood and the achievement of status, the thesis looks at women's different responses to these events, and places them in context of their worlds.

Five areas have been identified for study within this dissertation: the "gender map", childhood, sexuality, marriage and civil powers. To buttress examination of these areas, various other native groups have been incorporated into the study. Historiographically, Indian people are often examined as one group; the Lenape, the Cherokee, the Mohawk etc. This is often for practical reasons and offers control of the volumes of literature. Whilst providing a detailed and valuable study of one group, it is harder to locate their identities within a larger context or over several groupings. This thesis subverts this trend by using anomalies as the key directive, exploring a number of nations across the eastern seaboard. Some generalisations are made but are based on inferences drawn from existing historiography, such as patterns of behaviour that observers may have witnessed between several matrilineal groups, regardless of geographical location. The Mi'kmaq were incorporated into this study to also bring them back into the early American fold that focuses predominantly on the Iroquois or Cherokee and excludes Canada.³⁴

In the eighteenth century the dramatic situations of white and Indian male interactions were to create a vortex that sucked women's worlds into it, very often eradicating their unique and vibrant identities within the literature. As much of it was generated in warfare, women's actions are often filtered through – or subordinated to – the activities of men involved in war and diplomacy, such as William Johnson's views on female roles in state affairs, or the soldiers who charged women to carry secret letters on their behalf.³⁵ Whilst acknowledging the problems inherent in analysing such sources created by men, I have nonetheless chosen to explore how women handled change, particularly towards the end of

³³ Thomas J. Brown, *Place-names of the Province of Nova Scotia* (Nova Scotia 1922).

³⁴ As British allies, the Iroquois generated extensive literature, which has become a rich source for study. Likewise the Cherokee and Creek were sometimes allies and produced their own written material into the nineteenth century. The Creeks also gained prominence at the start and end of the eighteenth century. The Mi'kmaq fade from American history as Nova Scotia became part of British territory but have been reincorporated here.

³⁵ J. Sullivan et. al, (eds) *The Papers of Sir William Johnston, 14 Vols.* (New York 1921-1965); Richard Cotymore Diary, Cpt. Demere papers, Public Records Office, W/O, 34/35, Jan 17th, Jan 23rd 1760.

the century, and to place them at the centre of the narrative.³⁶ Much of this approach pays tribute to the methodology of Theda Perdue who successfully inverted myths and ideas of Indian women's subordinate roles. Perdue also avoided the 'declension narrative', the temptation to chart the decline of women's roles in the face of encroaching 'civilised' practices of settlers, rather than frame women's responses in terms of adaptation or manipulation of change. I have attempted to do this also, relying on the model proposed by Kathleen Brown that the declension narrative and essentialism can be avoided by use of comparative histories. In this case I have used the Mi'kmaq and Southeastern Indians to reinvigorate studies of gender and colonial interactions, and thus avoid the traps of parochialism and antiquarianism found within the sources.³⁷ Finally, viewing the same events from the female perspective is not to diminish the role that men played in women's lives – after all, it is difficult to disentangle the female experience from the accounts of men. But, as Kathleen Brown so succinctly put it, "historians can learn much about critical shifts in gender technologies by analyzing cultural texts produced about women even when they lack documents written by women. My suggestion that we learn more about manhood thus comes with the all-important caveat that we still need to know much more about women."³⁸ As a consequence of this study, I believe ideas of masculinity are more truthfully represented. Indeed, a reinterpretation of the sources reflects back a deep crisis of Indian masculinity.

The structure of the dissertation is intended to reflect women's life stages and starts with an overview of how Indian women's violence is presently understood. It then begins at a violent intersection of women's lives: motherhood and decisions of infanticide. Therefore the beginning of the child's life, marked with violence, met the mature woman, tasked with the power to make life and death decisions. In between birth and death, the thesis examines the cycles of violence, authority and power that developed through adolescence, as she entered adulthood to become a fully-realised native woman. Her acts of violence in this final arena bring the cycle to a close, as death rites turn to enemies, killing and the seizing of sacred powers.

The first chapter provides the foundation of the thesis by exploring conceptions of violence, its appropriate place and the social mores that endorse or condemn its performance within societies. It considers the gender map and the means by which

³⁶ This refers primarily to the end of the eighteenth century and Washington's civilisation imperative among the Southeastern Indians.

³⁷ Brown, 'Women's and Gender History', pp 311-328.

³⁸ Brown, 'Brave New Worlds', p325.

historians and colonial men understood the roles and functions of Indian women. It focuses particularly on how women's violence is understood in the present and the past, and the ways in which gendered identity was constructed around ideas that reinforced masculine and feminine ideals.

The second chapter reflects the life cycle of the Indian woman as she guided human life from life to death and back again, and begins with the role of the child in native societies. Assessing the earliest stages of a young girl's life showed that Indian social structures provided a far wider interpretation of what a woman could and should be, and it was in these formative years that a girl would first experience violence and the subjection of the enemy. I position the child as 'other' until such time as s/he was able to contribute to his or her community, and examine the early stages of violence as children were carefully and systematically introduced to extreme acts of violence, first as witnesses, then participants and finally as recipients as adolescence approached. Often these children were sons and daughters of white men, who, within a matrilineage, had little say in the fates of their children unless expressly approved of by their Indian wives.³⁹ In addition, the chapter examines issues of infanticide, abortion, scalping and the torture of children to demonstrate the founding principles that went into creating and sustaining the Indian woman's identity.

Following the stages in an Indian woman's life, sexuality became important as young girls sought to express burgeoning womanhood and religious powers. Choosing her first suitors, a girl expressed her female individuality as performed via sexual activities, as she sought status, trade goods, perhaps children and indications of her authority before seeking marriage. Sexual activity offered options to young girls as they made their earliest adult choices, with or without parental approval. Throughout the century, sexual agency received much attention from observers, fascinated by the liberal nature of Indian sex. However, female sexuality presented increasing difficulties for Indian men as women continued to interact sexually with white men, sometimes to the detriment of the nation. This third chapter also incorporates discussions of adultery, sex for material gain and rape. Evidence of sexual freedom sits alongside evidence of sexual violence against women, which acts as a counterpoint to the many examples of female sexuality described by white men as libertarian, "whorish" or depraved.⁴⁰ Such sexual violence signalled manifest changes in Indian society that were both frightening yet apparently necessary, and provide

³⁹ G. A. Waselkov & K. E. Holland Braund (eds), *William Bartram on the Southeastern Indians*, (Lincoln, London: University of Nebraska Press, 1995), p284.

⁴⁰ Lawson, *A New Voyage to Carolina*, p35.

further evidence of the variety of female statuses that existed. Despite such abuses, women retained a strong sense of sexual autonomy and defied several Euro-American attempts to reposition their female sexual roles into something more less malleable. Creation and transformation was at the core of female worlds and sex was viewed within that rubric, a tool and function of womanhood. Indian female sexuality was viewed within a deeper understanding of the separate role of women from men – therefore sexual exchanges had different meaning and concepts of power.

There follows a study of the multiple marriages a woman could expect to partake of in her lifetime. Where this chapter is less concerned with actual violent acts, it demonstrates that women reserved a very specific attitude towards white men. Some potential husbands were viewed initially in the context of war as weakened captives. At other times they were well-connected traders, influential Indian agents or, alternatively, a rapid means to a material end as women sought trade goods and thus, enhanced status. To realise varying goals, alternative marriage types were practiced from serial monogamy to temporary marriages, and polygamy. Multiple divorces prevailed and where some white men embraced such loose familial and paternal connections, others sought to regulate this behaviour. Marriages offered up their own extraordinary cornucopia of relations between white men and Indian women, with a variety of unions reflecting individual needs, male aspirations and female requirements.

Finally, in the latter stages of the female life cycle, I address the mature woman and her enhanced status within society. Fully conversant with white men, and comfortable with their authority Indian women freely expressed their political opinions in council, acted as mentors and were sought as valued counsel. Their speeches revealed a strong grasp of their status and the expected deference from white men, Indian warriors and young people. In this stage of their lives, women acted as guardians of life and death as honoured “Beloved Women” and grandmothers.⁴¹ They decided who lived and died, who became adopted and who was sold. They decided who was tortured and in this role they took great pride in their extreme acts. As matrons, mothers and chiefs, their words carried weight. I demonstrate that accountability for actions was a key indicator of female status and authority – something that had profound and devastating consequences for some tribes when women exercised their femininity in ways contrary to masculine desires. Evidence of this

⁴¹ King, D. H., (ed) *The Memoirs of Lt. Henry Timberlake, The Story of a Soldier, Adventurer, and Emissary to the Cherokees 1756-1765*, (Chapel Hill 2007), p39; Maillard, *An Account of the Customs and Manners of the Micmakis and Maricheets*.

accountability can be seen from the start of the century right through to the very end, indicating that some core values remained within tribal female lives despite colonial changes. The attempts by women to shape and/or retain control of events show powerful elements of femininity that have hitherto been rejected or ignored: in this final chapter I elevate this aspect of their lives to demonstrate that violent punishments for women were not evidence of subjugation and control, but indicated the relative impact of their actions on Indian affairs. For the most part, the final chapter focuses on the Creeks and utilises the abundant sources that offer unique insights to female authority in this period.

Violence weaves a thread through women's experiences, not as a separate category for analysis but a theme that remains constant in their lives. It was introduced to young girls and was expected to remain a part of them throughout adulthood, forming a crucial and natural facet of their identities. Their own individual interpretations of these identities, which may have been several within one woman, cannot be separated: to do so would be a disservice to the lives they led. This thesis, then, is a fresh portrayal of Indian women's worlds. It follows a cyclical pattern that mirrored their experience from conception to birth, to sexuality, birth-control and marriage, then onto maturity and matronhood where women once again undertook the task of giving life – or ending it. If anything, this dissertation will complicate existing narratives and make a nice departure from histories that still rely on “guys and guns” to tell the Native American story.⁴²

⁴² Ann M. Little commenting on her book *Abraham in Arms, War and Gender in Colonial New England* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007) on *Historiann: History and Sexual Politics, 1492 to the Present*: <http://www.historiann.com/2011/03/16/history-and-humor/>

Chapter 1

Violence and Women

The Gender Map and Ritual Native Female Violence in Early America

Native North American women occupy a relatively small portion of colonial American and Canadian historiography, and often appear as handmaidens to masculine endeavour in the dynamic age of colonisation and expansion. The construction of their image relied heavily on Euro-American conceptions of recognised femininities but accounts of Native women's warfare activities challenged these preferred images of exotic temptresses or 'squaw' drudges. Much of the evidence now indicates that indigenous peoples recognised a far more complex and nuanced femininity, and such concepts of alternative gendered behaviour present a significant challenge to present historical (mis)constructions of native female identities.

This chapter examines the historical treatment of ritual violence and torture committed during warfare by native North American women, a subject that presently occupies an ambiguous position in colonial history. The purpose is two-fold. It is intended to dismantle some of the gendered and ideological framework that informs interpretations of women's violent acts, showing how they have been manipulated or deciphered to render the acts more intelligible to western concepts of femininity. Secondly, the chapter considers the historical 'anomaly' of ritual female violence. It proposes that such anomalies should be utilised rather than sidelined. These anomalies can distort perceptions of appropriate womanhood sufficiently enough to provide an alternative yet firm basis for examination of the other aspects of Indian women's lives, many of which also appeared brutal or harsh in conduct. Such brutality consistently revealed itself in childhood, early sexuality, marriage and in matronhood. Therefore, by dismantling the framework – or gender map – violent anomalies can be integrated into the analysis and provide a more satisfactory account of Indian women's lives.¹

¹ The idea of the 'gender map' arose during communication between the author and Dr Rachel Jones at the University of Dundee, whilst writing an article on Indian female violence. The gender map seemed to best embody the idea of a western gender identity being superimposed – or mapped – upon indigenous peoples, either as a means to illuminate commonalities or obscure / highlight socio-cultural differences.

Despite numerous primary sources detailing ritualised female violence, the purposes behind it have so far eluded historical explanation and the subject falls into no current categories of analysis: it is perceived as neither a valid part of native warfare, nor as part of the standard package of “typical” or “appropriate” female behaviours. This lacuna can partly be explained by “gender mapping”, an approach that primarily employs western concepts of femininity/masculinity and “maps” them onto historical accounts of native female behaviour, thereby constructing comprehensible Indian identities that can be adequately incorporated into the historical record. However, the gender map’s boundaries exclude unconventional female behaviour and deny the possibility that alternative femininities existed in Early Modern America, evidenced by the presence of ritual torture conducted by women which appeared to be “normal” rather than anomalous. To make sense of ritual violence, then, it is necessary to recognise how and why historians have imposed such mapping.

This chapter begins by looking at a rare late seventeenth-century account of white female violence in colonial America and how it is historically assessed in relation to Indian female ritual torture. This illustrates the difficulties facing analysis of native female violence when patriarchally-informed eye-witness interpretations are married to the gender mapping of modern history. The subject will then be broken down in more detail, looking at the attitudes that informed the early reports of native women followed by a discussion of the gendered nature of modern historical inquiry. A closer look at the purposes of torture and its location among native female identities concludes the chapter. Peeling back these interpretative layers can help bridge the gap between the “imagined” Indian woman and the contrary evidence which indicates that among indigenous North American people radically different views of gender behaviour existed.

This discussion is not intended to suggest that ritual torture happened every time captives were brought back to a village, and neither is it stating that torture was practised by every tribe and by women only. What *is* clear is that almost all tribes used ritual torture that to some degree usually involved female participation, and that there was very often a female-*only* component. This female-only aspect of torture is worthy of examination because the very existence of such a mechanism in Indian societies can help illuminate native female experience in war. Furthermore, it can act as a gateway to exploring alternative female roles and interactions with European men that extended far beyond the present historical comfort zones of mother, wife and concubine.

Constructing the Native American Woman

White men who interacted with Native women wrote about them in dramatically different and seemingly contradictory ways. The examples below provide a clear illustration of this.

Innocence, modesty and love appear to a stranger in every action and movement: and these powerful graces she has so artfully played upon her beguiled and vanquished lover...

*William Bartram on a Southeastern Seminole woman.*²

One sees without wonder young Indian women so chaste and modest as to serve as an example, and to teach those of their sex the love and esteem for which they ought to have for modesty and chastity.

*Chrestien Le Clercq on the Mi'kmaq.*³

The Woman seems to be of that tender Composition, as if they were design'd rather for the Bed then [sic] Bondage...

*John Lawson on the Carolina Indians.*⁴

So the wretch was handed over at once to the women who, like so many Furies, seized him and tied him to a tree trunk with his legs bound together. They built a very hot fire in front of and very near him and, seizing branches, they applied them to the sole of his feet which they had stretched out to the fire ... taking live coals and putting them on the most sensitive part of his body ... using their knives to cut him deeply ... plunging his charred feet and legs into a cauldron of boiling water, and then scalping him. They were unable to make him suffer more, because he died after the last torture. But they did cut out his tongue, even though he was dead, planning to force another English prisoner ... to eat it.

*The Abbé Maillard on the Mi'kmaq, c.1740.*⁵

² Waselkov G. A., Holland Braund K. E. (eds), *William Bartram on the Southeastern Indians* (Nebraska 2002) p47.

³ C. Le Clercq, *Nouvelle Relation de la Gaspésie* (Paris 1691), p417.

⁴ J. Lawson, *The History of Carolina; Containing the Exact Description and Natural History of that Country* (London 1714), p188.

Their punishment is always left to the women... The victim's arms are fast pinioned, and a strong grape-vine is tied around his neck, to the top of the war pole, allowing him to track around, about fifteen yards. They fix some tough clay on his head, to secure the scalp from the blazing torches... The women make a furious onset with their burning torches... But he is sure to be overpowered by numbers, and after some time the fire affects his tender parts. They pour over a quantity of cold water, and allow him a proper time of respite, till his spirits recover and he is capable of suffering new tortures. Then the like cruelties are repeated until he falls down, and happily becomes insensible of pain. Now they scalp him... dismember, and carry off all exterior branches of the body (pudendis non exceptis), in shameful and savage triumph.

*James Adair on the Chickasaws, c.1744.*⁶

They decided to burn the soles of his feet until they were blistered, then to put grains of corn under the skin and to chase him with clubs until they had beaten him to death.

*James Mooney, Cherokee myth, 18th Century.*⁷

These accounts are of interest, not just because of their vast difference in depictions of native women, but because the latter three descriptions have imposed significantly less gender mapping than the former. The accounts of ritual torture lack “imagined” behaviour and purpose, almost as though the authors are uncertain how to categorise the women's motivations or intent. In stark contrast, the first three accounts reveal a great deal of imagination and desire, a desire to “create” a woman who can be easily comprehended, both by the writer and his audience, whether she is sexual or chaste. Here, the women display European femininities of submission (Lawson), and where female agency is evident, it is either appropriate (Le Clercq) or sexualised (Bartram), rendering it a less

⁵ The Abbé Pierre Antoine Simon Maillard in Ruth Holmes Whitehead, *The Old Man Told Us, Excerpts from Mi'kmaq History 1500-1950* (Halifax, Nova Scotia, 1991) p117.

⁶ J. Adair, *The History of the American Indians; Particularly Those nations Adjoining to the Mississippi, East and West Florida, Georgia, South and North Carolina, and Virginia* (London 1775), p390.

⁷ J. Mooney, *Myths of the Cherokee*, From the Nineteenth Annual Report of the Bureau of American Ethnology 1897-98, Part I. (1900), p360.

worthy aspect of female behaviour and consequently devaluing her agency. In fact, Bartram had never met the woman in question but, undaunted, he imposed on this allegedly sensuous mercenary a series of personality traits that include deception and emotional manipulation of hapless males. She is challenging, indeed, but it is a feminine challenge which ultimately does not pose any threat to manliness or intrude on masculine arenas.

These are striking yet quite representative examples of gender mapping. Whenever there is a deviation from gender mapping in historical first-hand accounts, it is often to illustrate the “savagery” of Indian life in contrast with civilised white customs, such as the descriptions of Indian women as drudges, slaves or mere “mules”.⁸ Of course, the gender map could be modified to suit circumstance but it was usually to accommodate ideas of superior/inferior masculinities and did not necessarily include discussion of femininities. For the most part, however, Indian women were presented in categories that had meaning for westerners, thus establishing channels of trans-Atlantic communication. Favoured categories included the romantic, self-sacrificing Pocahontas or Sacagawea, sexualised exotics, diligent workhorses and even the saintly and pious religious converts such as Kateri Tekakwitha. When placed next to wilful torturers, though, the standard western images of the native female seem incongruous, making it extremely hard to position women in Indian-Western discourses of femininity.

Accounts of ritual violence demonstrate a tendency to focus on the lurid acts of torture. The behaviour proved awkward for observers to mould into palatable presentations for western consumption and as a result, there is far less imposition of conventional gendered characteristics on Indian women in such descriptions. Observations of the activities were accounts of *actions* that did little to illuminate the purposes of the acts, or what women were expressing about themselves. Observers’ opinions were vague, or even absent, for without the tools to make an assessment, explanations stalled at “madness”, “fury” or “savagery”, western explanations for female behaviour that stepped outside of conventional and approved boundaries.⁹

⁸ W. Wood, *New England's Prospect*, in Vaughan, Alden T (ed), (1634, Massachusetts 1977); F. Parkman, *The Jesuits in North America in the Seventeenth Century* (Boston 1867), p. xxxiii; B. Trigger, *Natives and Newcomers, Canada's "Heroic Age" Reconsidered* (Montreal 1986), p. 30; Lawson, *The History of Carolina*, p23.

⁹ Maillard, *The Old Man Told Us*, p116.

For observers it may have been genuinely difficult to comprehend such behaviour as having any direction or rationale, and rarely would such acts have been credited as demonstrating order or as playing an intrinsic part in the native war process.¹⁰ Western intellectual and Protestant thought had removed the image of authoritative females from a large section of European public life post-Reformation, and as the Virgin Mary's influence declined so too did specifically female spiritual power lose its essential place in social relations. And despite a lingering fascination with Amazon warrior myths of antiquity, most of which appeared to express admiration for women performing male roles successfully, any part in the western warfare process was linked to women as supporters and victims of male warfare rather than active participants in their own right. Patriotic femininity was certainly acceptable, such as the proud mother of a warrior/soldier, or a wife encouraging a husband to take up arms, but such behaviour was nonetheless viewed as lacking the male moral imperative. Any female agency existed only as a consequence of – and in relation to – the primary actions of the male.¹¹

Femininities, Moral Worth and Violent Expression

Attempting to place female violence within established gendered frameworks of enquiry can present difficulties for the historian. James Axtell's 1974 article "The Vengeful Women of Marblehead: Robert Roule's Deposition of 1677" illustrates this point rather well. His study focused on an attack made by women on a group of captive men.¹² Although suffering heavy losses at the hands of Indians, the men of Marblehead, Massachusetts, had sailed home after a daring escape from Indian captivity with two Indian captives of their own. The women of the town had greeted the group then proceeded to attack and kill the captives, "their flesh in a manner pulled from their bones", despite the protestations of the townsmen. Roule's deposition related the colonists' capture, escape and the attack, and his description of the attack revealed a thinly-veiled masculine disapproval of the women's actions. To Roule, the women's behaviour lacked moral worth. He referred to them as "tumultuous" and complained of attacks on the white men who attempted to rescue the captives. The men of the town had specific plans for these captives, which the women, with "their bloody purpose" had failed to fully comprehend.

¹⁰ Abbé Pierre Antoine Simon Maillard, *An Account of the Customs and Manners of the Micmakis and Maricheets Savage Nations* (London 1758), p1, 16, 17; Adair, *The History of the American Indians*, p390-91.

¹¹ J. B. Elshtain, *Women and War* (New York 1987), p71, 143, 168; G.C. Rothery, "The Amazons of America", *The Amazons*, (London 1910); M. McKeon, "Historicizing Patriarchy: The Emergence of Gender Difference in England, 1660-1760", *Eighteenth-Century Studies* (Spring 1995).

¹² J. Axtell, "The Vengeful Women of Marblehead: Robert Roule's Deposition of 1677", *The William and Mary Quarterly* (October 1974).

Roule, and perhaps his contemporaries, were uncomfortable with the wanton expression of violence, not because women had adopted “masculine” behaviour, but because they had deviated from the acceptable, supporting, nurturing and empathic “war” role. These white women had disregarded the wishes of the townsmen, their female violent expression wholly inappropriate in the context of war.

The article is valuable as it draws attention to colonial female violence and reveals contemporary male attitudes towards such violence. It is also a modern example of historical gender mapping regarding Indian women. Addressing these two themes of feminine violent expression and its place within the gender map can aid the construction of counter-theories regarding native female roles in warfare. The deposition clearly shows the Marblehead women’s agency and determination, but analysis of the women’s participation is secondary to the evidence Axtell gleans from the document regarding native war practices. This is perhaps because the women’s activities occupy only a small portion of the deposition itself. The majority of it describes the attack by Indians and the escape, and although the women’s acts are notable, they are not prioritised. Nonetheless, Axtell has subverted the colonial males’ positioning of women by affording them a higher profile (not least with the title of the article). He has also contextualised the deposition within the colonial environment, and rather than view the incident as an expression of European values being played out in a foreign environment, he has approached it as an Early American event, shaped by particular circumstances and localised pressures. It is interesting, then, that the paragraph in which Axtell addresses the women’s motivations for the attack does not employ this method. Instead, the women’s acts are assessed directly in relation to native female ritual torture. As two groups of women who lived on the same frontier soil, this linking of their behaviours may appear to be a natural step. However, such an analysis does not take account of the varying social customs that gave rise to ritual torture among native peoples, and assumes the two behaviours functioned on the same level and were driven by the same desires: essentially, their behaviour is united by their sex rather than shaped by their respective societies.

The Marblehead women’s actions may not have been commonplace any more than ritual torture by native women was an everyday occurrence. The difference lies in the existence of ritual torture as an acceptable social tool of native warfare, part of a complex social role. In contrast, white men disapproved of mob-like, white female violence, and they did not countenance it as an acceptable cultural expression of femininity. The difference between the two forms of violence may have been more evident through some analysis of the

particular environmental pressures and social strains colonial women faced during periods of intense warfare and human loss. For example, where native women clearly had an outlet for grief, how did colonial women normally deal with such loss, and what made Marblehead unique? In this particular case of gender mapping, linking the Marblehead violence to Indian violence confines Indian female acts within a western sphere of comprehension. It denies uniquely Indian explanations and simultaneously designates ritual torture as anomalous, consequently diminishing its perceived historical importance.

Another historian of native peoples has also challenged the significance of ritual torture by native women, suggesting it was exaggerated by observers who had never witnessed women's participation in torture and execution in Europe.¹³ Although a perfectly valid viewpoint, this approach suggests that it is not the *existence* of female torture that is noteworthy for this historian, but rather its intensity and severity. In this sense, the problem of the historical placement of ritual violence by native women is dealt with by dismissing it as either unimportant or anomalous. Jeanne Boydston challenges such an approach, illustrating the benefits of exploring historical anomalies rather than questioning or dismissing their validity.

Anomalies are just what ought to interest us as historians – not so we can figure a way to force them to conform to the framework, but because they disrupt the common sense of the framework and may signal that something is being missed or suppressed within it.¹⁴

Boydston goes on to stress that the “something” is probably local, “the ground of particular historical time and space”. Axtell has drawn attention to this unusual account of female violence in this manner, but the same holds true for accounts of ritual torture, whether exaggerated or not. It is the existence of these actions that is key, and the possible exaggeration of the practices does not diminish the relevance of ritual violence as a valid line of historical inquiry, particularly as regards indigenous women's lives.¹⁵

¹³ B. Trigger, *The Huron: Farmers of the North* (New York, 1969), p52.

¹⁴ J. Boydston, “Gender as a Question of Historical Analysis”, *Gender & History*, Vol. 20, No. 3 (November 2008), p560.

¹⁵ Axtell, “The Vengeful Women of Marblehead”; Elshtain, *Women and War*, p183; C. Cockburn, “The Gendered Dynamics of Armed Conflict and Political Violence” in O. N. Moser and F. C. Clark (eds), *Victims, Perpetrators or Actors? Gender, Armed Conflict and Political Violence* (London 2001), p14; P. Goodman, *Women, Sexuality and War* (Hampshire 2002), p23.

Axtell has assessed accounts of women by colonial men, a subject that carries its own set of analytical problems. The historian can only work with the available evidence, and whilst challenging their nineteenth-century predecessors' perceptions of the Native American, the historian must simultaneously attempt to peel back layers of exaggeration and moral disapproval, while trying to gauge and interpret what lies beneath.¹⁶ Such colonial witnesses, influenced by prevailing, enlightened (and pre-Enlightenment) thought on masculine "reason", feminine "passions" and appropriate gendered behaviour, managed to convey these ideals in their accounts of Indian and white women. To eighteenth-century philosophers, these gendered characteristics were rooted in biology and were thus unalterable, rendering women unfit for rational, political responsibilities. It therefore followed that women's violent expression, even if politically motivated, lacked any real worth: it was simply without masculine form and organisation. Gender theorist Victor Seidler has argued that for men, reason had become synonymous with masculinity, an intrinsic part of the male psyche, and therefore all males, regardless of class, age or race, were automatically deemed to be more worthy of social inclusion and responsibility than women.¹⁷ If this is true then it would suggest that in the early modern period, women required someone to speak on their behalf. Simply put, without a male to authorise, approve or interpret violent or explosive female behaviour, the acts were relatively inconsequential.¹⁸ Conversely, "Male violence could be *moralized* as a structured activity – war – and thus be depersonalised and idealized."¹⁹ When it appeared to be personal i.e. female, violence was deemed "unruly". Marblehead, mob-like behaviour, then, was merely symptomatic of the "natural" female inclination to such passions, and lacking the natural gift of reason, native women's torture could be viewed as a morbid curiosity rather than a valid representation of indigenous lives.²⁰

From the early modern to the modern period, the actions of western women who stepped outside the bounds of womanly behaviour during war were attributed to the displacement that warfare imposed on their lives. Such actions were tolerated by society as a temporary

¹⁶ Trigger, *Natives and Newcomers*, p7-19. See also F. Jennings, "Francis Parkman: A Brahmin among Untouchables", *The William and Mary Quarterly*, Vol. 42, No. 3 (July 1985), p306-28, and F. Jennings, "A Vanishing Indian: Francis Parkman Versus His Sources", *The Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography*, Vol. 87, No. 3 (Jul., 1963), pp306-23.

¹⁷ V. Seidler, *Rediscovering Masculinity, Reason, Language and Sexuality* (London 1989), pp14-18, 44-64; V. Seidler, *Unreasonable Men, Masculinity and Social Theory* (London 1994), pxi.

¹⁸ J. Lawson, *The History of Carolina*, p35; Seidler, *Unreasonable Men*, p3; J. F. Trayer, *Marriage and the Family in Eighteenth Century France* (Ithaca, London 1980), pp48-54.

¹⁹ Elshtain, *Women and War*, p169.

²⁰ Seidler, *Unreasonable Men*, p3; C. Montesquieu, Book VII, "Consequences of the Different Principles of the Three Governments with Respect to Sumptuary Laws, Luxury, and the Condition of Women", *The Spirit of Laws* (1752).

state with the expectation that women would return to “natural” roles when political order had been restored, or when anger had finally been expunged, as shown in “The Vengeful Women of Marblehead”.²¹ For example, during the Seven Years’ War the dislocation of warfare made it socially acceptable for white women to pick up arms against Indians. However, this model of womanhood was rewritten after the American Revolution when nurturing homemakers, rather than valiant heroines, were considered necessary for the success of the New Republic.²²

Historians, then, must be sensitive to the hidden sub-text in documents that may reveal aspects of female warfare practices. However, whilst many historians have challenged successfully their predecessors’ analyses of native peoples, perhaps one of the biggest obstacles to understanding ritual female violence is how far western, Enlightenment concepts of public/private “spheres” continue to inform current historical conceptions of native lifeways and warfare. This social and gender map favours western warfare styles by emphasising Indian men’s participation, polarising male and female experiences of war, and thereby discouraging investigation of female war practices.²³ Gender theory can inform the analysis of historical texts by providing relevant tools to remove layers of obfuscation and allow scrutiny – and removal – of gender mapping.

To eighteenth-century observers, the imposition of the ideal characteristics of western women meant that Indian women could be moulded into something similar and comprehensible. For example, Indian female ownership of her body, and thus her sexuality, could be described as “prostitution” when she used it as a commodity for trade. Moreover, there were precedents for warrior women, often personifying patriotic feminine virtue as the “mother of the nation”, such as Boudica or Joan of Arc. The supposed calming influence of women was often viewed as a nurturing balance to the impulsive acts of the male, perhaps allowing a small degree of white toleration for Indian female political

²¹ Moser, Clark, *Victims, Perpetrators or Actors?*, p. 14; Goodman, *Women, Sexuality and War*, p4, 15; Axtell, “The Vengeful Women of Marblehead”; Elshtain, *Women and War*, p. 170; M. Gailus, “Food Riots in Germany in the Late 1840s”, *Past & Present*, No. 145 (November 1994), p175; C.A. Bouton, “Gendered Behavior in Subsistence Riots: The French Flour War of 1775”, *Journal of Social History*, Vol. 23, No. 4 (Summer, 1990), p735-754.

²² See J. Namias, *White Captives* (North Carolina 1993) and L. Kerber, “Separate Spheres, Female Worlds, Woman’s Place: The Rhetoric of Women’s History”, *The Journal of American History*, Vol. 75, No. 1 (June 1988), and *Women of the Republic: Intellect and Ideology in Revolutionary America* (North Carolina 1980).

²³ Goodman, *Women, Sexuality and War*, p. 162; Trigger, *Natives and Newcomers*, p. 30; Lawson, *The History of Carolina*, p. 35, 199; Parkman, *The Jesuits*, pp307-08, 373-7; Bartram, *Southeastern Indians*, p113; A. Loudon, *A Selection of some of the Most Interesting Narratives of Outrages Committed by the Indians*, Vol. II (Carlisle 1811).

opinion in their capacity as mother and wives.²⁴ This permitted a historical acknowledgment of the position of Cherokee Chief Nancy Ward as a “mother” of the tribe, and her compassion was lauded when she saved the lives of those destined for torture. When she endorsed the torture of a young boy, however, contemporary comment stalled, unable to find a way of interpreting her actions.²⁵

For many European travellers, it was natural and appropriate to maintain the strict separation of war and home i.e. male and female spaces. To these men, women’s traditional link with de-prioritised domestic areas rendered the Indian camp a place of non-violence, and it would logically follow that any violence performed by women in this area could not play a significant role in war.²⁶ Of course, when women performed “male” tasks competently, they could no longer sensibly be identified as “other”, and so distinctions were maintained within the accounts that supported the status of males, swiftly dismissing such female behaviour as “deviant”. Furthermore, to acknowledge the home camp as an arena of vital and necessary war activity would be to imbue women with unprecedented amounts of agency and will, their violent actions a direct challenge to notions of masculinity.

In the first instance, violence in the Indian village would have been an intrusion of the masculine into the feminine arena: to assert that this was normal war practice would have been to discount the existence of a “female” area. It is unlikely that a combined fe/male war space would have been acknowledged by observers, since male and female spaces were considered a vital part of social ordering.²⁷ Secondly, socially-sanctioned violence performed by women challenged Euro-American ideas of “natural” female characteristics, and were hardly compatible with other descriptions that firmly (and conveniently) placed Indian women alongside their white counterparts. Thirdly, that such violence should display the reason, structure and logic attributed to male violence would have been to locate women as social and intellectual equals of Indian males. Finally, violence that had meaning beyond the taking of a life i.e. that which invoked religious and spiritual powers,

²⁴ J. Axtell, (ed), *The Papers of William Johnson, 1758 and 1752*, in *The Indian Peoples of Eastern America* (New York 1981) pp.154-7. See also Loudon, *A Selection of some of the most interesting Narratives*, for demonstrations of Indian female “mercy” in warfare.

²⁵ T. Perdue, *Cherokee Women, Gender, Culture and Change*, (Nebraska 1998) p54, 209. J.G.M. Ramsey, *The Annals of the Tennessee to the End of the Eighteenth Century* (Philadelphia 1853), p157-8.

²⁶ Goodman, *Women, Sexuality and War*, p15, 18.

²⁷ Elshtain, *Women and War*, p164-5; C. Montesquieu, “Book VII Consequences of the Different Principles of the Three Governments with Respect to Sumptuary Laws, Luxury, and the Condition of Women”, *The Spirit of Laws* (1752).

would have meant that Indians were fighting a war in a manner that white men could not have easily comprehended. Having a shared concept of the “rules” was necessary to ensure clear winners and losers, and thus, justification for subordination of peoples (or a valid reason for the ejection of whites from Indian soil should they lose).

The Abbé Maillard, referring to the practice of ritual torture, wrote from Nova Scotia in the 1760s:

If the missionary is wise he will be very careful to say not one word then against these horrors [torture], because not only will he speak in vain, but he will also be in grave danger of suffering the same fate.²⁸

The Abbé was stationed among the Mi'kmaq, and his quotation suggests that in some cases, rather than needing protection, native women inspired genuine fear among white men, which may have presented interpretative problems for white observers.²⁹ The accounts indicate that time was devoted to the preparation of captives for torture. Areas were designated and platforms for the exhibition of the captive were constructed. Captives were examined and selected or rejected by experienced, sharp-eyed women. There was rarely evidence of compassion or “nurture” among these women at this point.³⁰ Children were trained from an early age to perform such gruesome acts as amputations, encouraged to eat body parts of the victims, and to enjoy their torment. This could take hours or days, and unlucky captives were revived after passing out, and sometimes were forced to watch friends suffer before the same violence was inflicted upon themselves. There was no attempt to shield women from the horrors of war, as Euro-American war customs indicated. Instead, women *became* one of the horrors of war for their white, male captives.³¹

Accounts of these horrors appear in Early American narratives yet find no definitive home among histories of women or warfare. Philomena Goodman has argued that such historical

²⁸ Maillard, “Lettre a Madame Drucourt”, Whitehead, *The Old Man Told Us*, p. 115.

²⁹ Anthony Casteel, Journal of Anthony Casteel, in *The Old Man Told Us*; D. Menzies, “A True Relation of the Unheard-of Sufferings of David Menzies, Surgeon, Among the Cherokees, and of His Surprising Deliverance”, *Royal Magazine* (1761), British Library.

³⁰ Adair, *The History of the American Indians*, p391.

³¹ Maillard, *An Account of the Customs and Manners of the Micmakis and Maricheets*; Adair, *The History of the American Indians*; Lawson J., *A New Voyage to Carolina* (1709, North Carolina 1984), p195; Mooney, *Myths of the Cherokees*, p192; Anderson, K., *Chain Her By One Foot: The Subjugation of Women in Seventeenth-Century New France* (London, New York 1991), p188, 193-223.

marginalisation of women's war efforts was directly linked to fears that acknowledging female ability in male space undermined manliness.³² Evidently, male physical and ideological fears were embodied in native female violence. It is therefore little wonder that from the earliest days of contact explorers, using their own European experience, had sought to make sense of values that were so contrary to their own. For the practical purposes of conducting good relations with native peoples in the eighteenth century, it was vital for settlers, travellers and observers to maintain a grasp on shared experiences and identify commonalities. For these men to acknowledge an alternative, viable and effective social structure would have been to undermine the superiority of the western way, whilst simultaneously undermining the ideological foundations of their own masculinity in western cultures. Gender historians and theorists have also suggested that women, located in the domestic arena, were "custodians of the values being fought for". To reinforce the value of male war acts, women *had* to be kept separate from war even when the evidence showed the contrary.³³

Hampered by patriarchally-informed historical accounts that sidelined female activities in warfare as auxiliary or mildly influential, ritual torture appears to have slipped under the historical radar, relegated to the realms of "unreasonable" acts that had no intrinsic value to the masculine war. For some historians, gender is "the principal articulator of the social order", and it has often involved inserting native women and men into appropriate boxes for analysis to allow construction of native-white discourses. This approach has produced some valuable work regarding native women's lives, illuminating their worlds as mothers, traders, leaders, lovers, grandmothers, sexual beings, wives and matrons, and it shows that the sensitive application of the gender map can be a useful departure point for further inquiry into indigenous societies.³⁴ However, rather than provide a solid comparative foundation, the map also appears to have led analysis astray on a number of occasions, and instead of acknowledging its own weakness even within western societies, it has been used to help establish common bonds with native peoples.³⁵ For example, within early modern western societies supposedly separate female space was not, in reality, solely female but was often shared with men and therefore conceded authority to men. Female space was, in fact, male space on loan. On the other hand, women were often present and active in

³² Goodman, *Women, Sexuality and War*, p. 98

³³ *Ibid.* p. 76.

³⁴ S. Sleeper-Smith, *Indian Women and French Men, Rethinking Cultural Encounter in the Western Great Lakes* (Massachusetts 2001); S. Van Kirk, *Many Tender Ties, Women in Fur Trade Society, 1670-1870* (Winnipeg 1980); J. S. H. Brown, *Strangers in Blood, Fur Trade Families in Indian Country* (Vancouver, London 1980); C. Devens, *Countering Colonization: Native American Women and Great Lakes Missions, 1630-1900* (Berkeley 1992).

³⁵ Goodman, *Women, Sexuality and War*, p17.

“male” spaces, too, and while there may have been an ideal of gendered space, reality did not always correspond with this.³⁶ Likewise, among native peoples the only strictly separate spaces appear to have been the menstruation huts and the warrior huts, and even then, males (and possibly females) were able to enter such spaces without fear by the use of specific herbs, potions or spiritual permissions that negated the dangerous cosmological effects of intruding in such spaces.³⁷ Most other areas were shared and any evidence of exclusion was based not necessarily on sex, but on the occasion or based on earning the right to enter sacred spaces by one’s contribution to the tribe.³⁸ Since the gender map bears only some resemblance to European social dynamics and is a reflection of ideals, its function as an explanatory tool is particularly undermined when addressing indigenous American groups.

Other problems can also arise when historians retain elements of western social/gender mapping within their analysis.

Often women’s activities and experiences are devalued because they are not traditionally located in the public sphere. When this gendered fluidity of time and space is made a focus of attention, this reveals the ever-blurred boundaries of the public and private.³⁹

Although referring to female experiences in the twentieth century, this comment holds equally true for analysis of eighteenth-century colonial warfare. In her discussion of women’s attempts to locate themselves within warfare, Goodman argued that,

There were challenges to the polarity of masculinity/femininity mirrored in the dualism of battleground/home front, foreign/local imagery that historically maintain gender difference.⁴⁰

³⁶ Several modern historians have drawn attention to women’s resistance to “separate spheres”, examining the expanding nature of domestic, feminine roles or suggesting that the spheres were as productive for women as they were restrictive. Others have challenged the historical interpretations of the spheres and demonstrated how women constructed meaning within their spheres to establish substantial counter-currents to masculine “dominance”. See N. F. Cott, *The Bonds of Womanhood: “Women’s Sphere” in New England 1780-1835* (Connecticut 1977); L. Kerber, “Separate Spheres, Female Worlds, Woman’s Place: The Rhetoric of Women’s History” and *Women of the Republic*; K. Warren, “Separate Spheres: Analytical Persistence in United States Women’s History”, *History Compass* 5, Issue 1 (2007).

³⁷ Adair, *The History of the American Indians*, p.124.

³⁸ E. B. Gonzalez, “An Ethnohistorical Analysis of Micmac Male and Female Roles”, *Ethnohistory*, Vol. 29 (Spring 1982); Maillard, *The Old Man Told Us*, p105, 115-19.

³⁹ Goodman, *Women, Sexuality and War*, p. 162.

⁴⁰ Ibid. p. 76.

By the nineteenth century, these ideals of fe/male spaces, or private/public spaces had been refined into a more substantial ideology and were evident in Western social and familial structures, and encoded in law and working practices.⁴¹ Challenging the employment of these values in interpretations of native societies certainly means revisiting concepts of Indian masculinities as well as femininities, seeking elements that do not correspond to western stereotypes. However, construction of Indian women's identities (both historical and modern) has partly depended on Indian men who appeared to conform to most western gender and social stereotypes. These included the warrior, hunter, chief, politician, religious leader (or shaman / medicine man) and diplomat, and also depended on Indian customs that appeared to mirror aspects of western life. Therefore, traditional (non)views of female violent expression during war go some way to explaining why most examples of female rituals have been limited to those related to menstruation, and discussions of violence have been restricted to male actions symbolically supported by women.⁴² However, the extent of ritual violence by women sits awkwardly between these two: the purpose of this thesis is to find its position within native female lives.

War and Power in Female Spaces

Indian women, then, appear to have been kept physically, ideologically and historically separated from warfare by modern analysis that has been unwittingly informed by "separate spheres" ideology. One historian of the Iroquois described women as having a "dominant voice" in matters of welfare and community, while men were tasked with activities outside the community including war and "public business and dealings with other groups".⁴³ Although the historian may be relying on sources that interpret native customs in the context of gendered space, the analytical language conveys and reinforces this ideology of fe/male spaces, and sharply separates women from war and public business. It raises the question, then, of how far women's engineering of political

⁴¹ M. J. D. Roberts, "Feminism and the State in Later Victorian England", *The Historical Journal*, Vol. 38 No. 1 (March 1995); R. L. Griswold, "Law, Sex, Cruelty, and Divorce in Victorian America, 1840-1900", *American Quarterly*, Vol. 38, No. 5 (Winter 1986); G. Best, *Mid Victorian Britain 1851-75* (London 1988), p119.

⁴² E. Crouch Zelman, "Reproduction, Ritual and Power", *American Ethnologist* (Nov. 1977), p. 716; D. Tedlock, "Torture in the Archives: Mayans Meet Europeans", *American Anthropologist*, (March 1993), p139-52; M. Taussig, "Culture of Terror - Space of Death. Roger Casement's Putumayo Report and the Explanation of Torture", *Comparative Studies in Society and History* (July 1984), p467-97; N. Knowles, "The Torture of Captives by the Indians of Eastern North America", *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* (March 1940).

⁴³ Trigger, *Natives and Newcomers*, p89.

marriages, social encounters and ritual violence could be considered participation in the public realm, since they often involved outsiders.

This is made more puzzling by the accounts of William Johnston, Superintendent of Indian Affairs and extremely familiar with Iroquoian customs (he was married to a Mohawk), who in 1762 found himself faced with the dilemma of how to *exclude* Iroquoian women from political and (presumably) public affairs after meeting several in succession, many of whom were accompanied by children.⁴⁴ The women met with Johnston in 1758, and although their words were spoken by a male delegate, their speeches were carefully prepared and their level of public participation was evident.⁴⁵

This contradicts the idea of a non-public role for Indian women (although warfare certainly could come under the banner of “community welfare”). Essentially, historical analysis has maintained the inappropriate application of gendered spaces and has polarised male and female participation within war and diplomacy. Of course, the lack of direct female testimony to contradict these beliefs does not provide substantial alternatives for historians to grapple with and analyse. But as Goodman has pointed out, “Gender cannot be mapped directly onto the dichotomy of the public-private sphere because this dualism is not rigid”.⁴⁶ Lacking ideological similarities with western gendered spaces, the application of these ideals is particularly damaging for analysis of native women because such structures reinforce the masculine nature of war, and subsequently deny native women an active performance within all aspects of it. The example of the Iroquoian women suggests that either the foundations for analysis are flawed or historians must abandon the gender map and widen concepts of war and public/political activities to include female participation, thus accommodating what would otherwise appear to be inconsistencies and anomalies.⁴⁷ By so doing, the anomalous loses its status as “unusual” and becomes evidence for alternative theories on women and war.

As demonstrated by some of the accounts in this chapter, warfare did not necessarily “displace” Indian women, and neither was ritual torture a temporary response to colonial war. It was an act often performed independently of men. It did not require the permission of men and it was not a masculine expression of war simply appropriated by women.

⁴⁴ G. M. Bataille, (ed), *Native American Women, A Biographical Dictionary* (New York, London 1993), p36-7.

⁴⁵ J. Axtell, *The Indian Peoples of Eastern America* (New York 1981) p155

⁴⁶ Goodman, *Women, Sexuality and War*, p159.

⁴⁷ Boydston, “Gender as a Question of Historical Analysis”, p560-61.

Ritual torture was a social mechanism built into native lifeways and customs. It provided a specifically female expression, no matter how “unfeminine” that may have appeared to white observers, and it was not a war role designed around an extension of female, domestic duties such as preparing food and moccasins, or expressing dis/approval of war.

The evidence clearly points to a chasm between native and western concepts of homefront, battlefield and gendered space, and analysis of ritual torture and violence by women must begin with the deconstruction of the western concept of appropriate gender spaces. When this is challenged, the notion of western masculine supremacy, often premised on the ideals of separate spaces, is also weakened and Indian lifeways begin to lose resemblance to western social structures. Political philosopher Jean Bethke Elshtain has suggested that,

Women are designated non-combatants because of the part they play in the reproductive process; because women have been linked symbolically to images of succouring non-violence.⁴⁸

But this is a Euro-American perspective and in native lives, there was no apparent discord or incompatibility between female bodies and propensity for violence. And neither were expressions of physical anger viewed as incongruous with nurturing skills. It therefore follows that a departure from analyses premised upon ideas of Euro-American gendered spaces and roles has the potential to reveal further dimensions of the native woman’s world. Viewed in this light, the position of ritual violence as an Indian female war expression begins to emerge as a distinctive component – or signifier – of an alternative gender structure.

The role of torture

Had ritual torture been a very minor part of native lives then perhaps traditional historical approaches to it would be understandable. However, the purposes of ritual torture, and the time and care devoted to preparation for the event, indicate that it held a great deal of significance for native peoples, and was considered a vital part of warfare. By extension, this suggests that the roles of native women were far more complex than presently

⁴⁸ Elshtain, *Women and War*, p. 183.

understood, and that status, authority and power were to be found in places that colonists had never thought to look.

After removing Euro-American ideologies and interpretive constructs, and examining indigenous American ritual violence on its own terms, the foundations and reasons for such activities start to become apparent. Native people were expected to appease the deceased who had been lost in combat, both male and female, and to seek retribution on their behalf. Many believed that without such actions these angry spirits would have plagued the tribe, for the deceased had as great a right to retribution as the living. For many native groups in early North America, punishment involved not just deceased relatives, but appeasement of the gods and spirits. For example, the North Carolinian Saponi believed that failure to torture prisoners could result in supernatural punishments, such a major storm or a crop failure, and invested with the blessing of the tribe and the power of the gods, women – charged with inflicting violence – were obliged to make torments as unpleasant as possible for the captive thereby benefiting the people.⁴⁹ Among the Iroquoian people, human sacrifices were made during war as offerings to the Sun and God of war, and appeared to be a two-part process, with men performing the initial and “private” torments while the public role was reserved for the women.⁵⁰ This shows that although personal vengeance may have formed part of their violent purposes (and would correspond with the Marblehead women’s behaviour), there were also more lofty considerations, too. Evidence also suggests there may well have been an element of pleasure in torture – it was one of the spoils of war and fulfilled a social release for people through expressions of rage and grief. One observer said women took their time in their violent ministrations in order, “that their death might be slower, their pain more exquisite, and the rejoicing more noted and of longer duration”.⁵¹ For women who committed such acts, it was necessary to embody tribal emotions in their performance, a public display for the benefit of onlookers and participants alike. For tribes who practiced cannibalism, torture provided purification for such purposes. One Algonquian Indian told the Jesuit Jacques Buteaux that the flesh of the enemy was “not good for eating”. Burning, torturing, roasting and renaming of the victim into a relative, purified the enemy, and only then would he or she make acceptable eating. Other tribes cannibalised to absorb the enemy’s power, or to show contempt, and another traveller recorded children being fed the still-

⁴⁹ Lawson, *A New Voyage to Carolina*, p49.

⁵⁰ Knowles, “The Torture of Captives”.

⁵¹ Adair, *The History of the American Indians*, p390.

warm blood of captives, while Huron women would feed enemy fingers to eager children.⁵²

Torture established a psychological power over one's enemy and many Native American groups feared those who practiced the worst abuses through torture. Iroquois and Cherokee acts were legendary, and added to their power and mystique: the more creative or extreme one's practices were, the greater the fear one could instill in the enemy.⁵³ Torture was a spiritual battle of wills between captor and captive, and women who challenged enemies in this arena were the conduits of the tribe's true source of power – the spiritual realm. Torture established tribal superiority over the enemy, tested their spiritual worth and ultimately, furnished the means to break the power of the enemy. How the captive behaved during these events was a strong indication of the spiritual resources the enemy could command – break the will, the spirit and the bodies of enemy captives, and the tribe could feel secure in the next encounter with them. Historian Greg Dowd summarised an account of one such battle where a captive pleaded for his life with native women: "The women of Itsati demonstrated Cherokee power, power ratified in the ultimate victory over the Shawnees". The warriors had done well to capture such an enemy, but the *real* victory came when the women broke the Shawnee warrior.⁵⁴

It would thus appear that warfare was brought back to the camp and that ritual torture was a continuation of that war until the final blow was administered, effectively signalling the death of the enemy. In this sense, what historians have most often viewed at the "private" arena took prominence over the "public". Among matri/patrilineal societies, there was strong evidence of egalitarianism when it came to war, a recognition that women were affected by it as much as men, and not necessarily as hapless victims pleading for a cessation of hostilities – often the reverse was true. Women felt rage and loss as keenly as males, and therefore had the right to seek retribution and to physically engage with the enemy just as males did. Rage, grief and revenge was expressed in a socially-sanctioned display of ritualised violence and sadism, encouraged from an early age, and in this way, violence and femininity were inextricably linked. Female responsibilities to families and the continuation of the tribe were also enhanced by expressions of violence. Contrary to Euro-American beliefs, life-taking was as natural as life-giving and may even have been the

⁵² Anderson, *Chain Her by One Foot*; J. Heckewelder, *History, Manners, and Customs of the Indian Nations Who Once Inhabited Pennsylvania and the Neighboring States*, The Historical Society of Pennsylvania (1876), p54; Knowles, "The Torture of Captives", p189.

⁵³ Taussig, "Culture of Terror"; Knowles, "The Torture of Captives", p7, 15.

⁵⁴ G. E. Dowd, *A Spirited Resistance* (Baltimore, London 1992), p15.

reason women were endowed with such responsibility. One did not preclude the other, unlike Euro-American beliefs which polarised the male-female relationship with life i.e. women give life, men take it.

Furthermore, the involvement of children at such an early age indicates that violent tribal customs, passed from parent to child, were not predicated on biological assumptions and dichotomies at first, but were evenly divided until adulthood and the separation of violent “duties”. This most likely took place around adolescence when youths began to seek out their individual powers and interpret their dreams.⁵⁵ Social status was often achieved through spiritual power, and warriors followed those they believed commanded superior spiritual powers: it was the means to secure victory over an enemy whilst ensuring your own survival.⁵⁶ Such power was available to women as much as to men, and from an early age they were encouraged to develop their spiritual prowess, sometimes adapting and adopting newer “powers” from missionaries and acting as shamans and healers.⁵⁷

Captive white males also provided other choices for women, and occasionally husbands were selected from the group, showing a type of agency in marital choices that has rarely been acknowledged. Typical Euro-American explanations for Indian women’s choice of white over red ranged from the superior “vigour” of white men, their desirable trade goods, and the greater status that white men could confer on native women.⁵⁸ However, such marital choices look decidedly different in the light of ritual violence, and women’s attitudes to captives can show less admiration for white men than the latter may have wished for. One Shawnee woman had praised warriors after a raid for bringing in “good meat”. By comparing the white man to the produce of a hunt, she at once conferred praise on the Indian males for a job well done whilst depersonalising the captive, turning him into something less than human with a status far beneath her own. Far from being greeted by eyelash-batting dusky maidens as indicated in the descriptions provided, a male captive may have felt a significant amount of trepidation on hearing himself described as meat.⁵⁹ Contemporary accounts often describe white males who clearly felt disturbed during their

⁵⁵ A detailed discussion of this is presented in Chapter 2.

⁵⁶ Bartram, *William Bartram on the Southeastern Indians*, p66-9.

⁵⁷ R. Conkling, “Legitimacy and Conversion in Social Change: The Case of the French Missionaries and the Northeastern Algonkian”, *Ethnohistory* (Winter 1974).

⁵⁸ Lawson, *A New Voyage to Carolina*, p167, 168.

⁵⁹ Dowd, *A Spirited Resistance*, p12.

“examination” as potential husbands and many felt uncomfortable at the prospect of being married to an Indian woman.⁶⁰

For these women ritual violence was a separate, female communication with the gods in the form of human sacrifice; a communication with the deceased to appease their wrath. Their violent acts were a communication with the living through their performance for the willing crowd. It was also a communication with the captives themselves as the women assessed the strengths of the enemy, and sought to undermine and destroy them, thereby revealing and reasserting the strengths of their own tribe. It was an irony that colonial wars, rather than further submerge native female identities, were often able to provide them with continuing opportunities to express their spirituality and tribal status. At the very least there appear to be significant undercurrents, or counter-currents, to the belief that wars were demonstrations of masculine prowess, and this process of ritual torture, the end of the native battle, allowed women to articulate *their* powers within the realm of colonial warfare.

Familial, social, political and spiritual responsibilities were evident in ritual violence. By creating an alternative theory and means of analysis that encompasses these violent acts, other behaviours that confounded observers may become more comprehensible. These include the themes discussed in the forthcoming chapters: infanticides and abortion customs; youth and ageing; the socially endorsed sexual activities of young girls; disrespectful brides and serial philanderers; mercenary traders and Indian plantation owners; political leaders. Such a range of roles and actions can be located within this spectrum, which provides an appropriate gendered language with which to articulate indigenous women’s femininities and relationships with white men. Furthermore, it allows deeper, more nuanced insights into colonial gender behaviours and Euro-American masculinities as women met, married, killed or traded with settler men.⁶¹

This chapter has shown that the purposes of female ritualised violence are more comprehensible when examined with a new lens, one that places violence at the core of discussion. Rather than attempt to form connections between Indian women’s actions and western concepts of femininity, it is more useful to create a new idea of femininity that valued violence as a constructive and natural aspect of womanhood. Finally, armed with

⁶⁰ Loudon, *A Selection of Some of the Most interesting Narratives of Outrages Committed by the Indians*, p100.

⁶¹ Anderson, *Chain Her by One Foot*, p78; Adair, *The History of the American Indians*, p128; Bartram, *William Bartram on the Southeastern Indians*, p65.

new perspectives, the focus on violence as described in this chapter provides a foundation to seek and discover greater meaning and significance in other aspects of Creek and Mi'kmaq women's worlds. Their lives were lived in a cycle; childhood to maidenhood, maidenhood to marriage, then on to matron-hood. At all life stages, death and violence had a specific meaning for women. It acted as a catalyst from one period to the next, a transformative element, allowing death to bring life and back again. The succeeding chapters will now explore that life process, beginning with childhood and concluding with the matrons.

Chapter 2

Children

The Treaty of Paris in 1783 marked the end of the hostilities of American Revolution. In a separate agreement Britain also ceded Florida back to the Spanish. With the British departing American shores, indigenous peoples who had supported the British were faced with facing the consequences of their inter-war alliances. By the close of the eighteenth century, America stood as the New Republic, its Indian peoples now “civilised” – or in the process of civilising – and the remainder moved on to new areas or dispersed across the eastern seaboard.

The outbreak of war had generated a complex array of responses from North American Indian nations, with some opting to support the rebels, others the Crown, and some groups preferring neutrality. Such a varied response was understandable – after all, indigenous groups had a diverse range of needs, interests and concerns. These included trade and economic concerns, existing alliances, the inability of American rebels to distinguish between their native allies and enemies (and thus killing them), continued settler encroachment on Indian territories, and previous negative experience of involvement in non-native wars. Further complicating the picture for Southeastern Indians in particular were the Creek-Choctaw wars and the British hostilities with Spain. Southeastern Indian support was essential to British continued presence on the continent, of course. As a result, these complicated issues provoked a variety of stances and caused tribal divides. For example, some Creeks wished to remain neutral: like the Cherokee they had experienced the consequences of being involved in non-Indian wars.¹ The Upper Creeks wished to retain their profitable and established trade relations, and therefore allied with the British, remaining pro-British throughout the conflict. Other Creeks groups, enraged by attacks by Georgians on Indian towns were also persuaded to join the British, often through the manipulations of British Indian agents who exerted influence among their allies.

Other Southeastern Indians maintained a degree of neutrality, such as the Chickasaw. The Choctaw, with a large population in 1775, were well-placed to assert neutrality also, but,

¹ Colin G. Calloway, *The American Revolution in Indian Country: Crisis and Diversity in Native American Communities* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995), p43.

like the Creeks and the Cherokees, split into factions with some groups favouring the Crown and others Spain.² The Cherokee divided along generational lines as aggressive young warriors followed Dragging Canoe in retaliation against settler encroachment. The subsequent retaliation by Americans caused the break-up of towns as Cherokees sought refuge among neighbouring nations – friend and former enemy – and created new communities, such as the rebellious Chickamauga. Regardless of the stance taken by Indian neighbours during the wars, the succeeding decades were to prove challenging for the Indian peoples of the Southeast, and little regard was paid to previous alliances.³ The war had also exacerbated existing tensions among native groups. The dispersal of peoples fractured Indian identities and in the wake of British departure after the war, many found that their territories had been ceded by the British to the Americans. It was a bitter blow.

The chaos of the war therefore resulted in a period of jostling for recognition of tribal sovereignty from the Americans. Despite the crushing effects of the war, the Chickasaw and Creeks managed to maintain some equilibrium with their American neighbours after 1783, with French and Spanish proximity in the southeast playing in their favour. The Choctaw, now unable to play European powers against each other, continued to adapt the changes as far as they could to their advantage. Their attempts to work with the new power structures resulted in a new status. By the end of the century, the Choctaw joined the Creeks, Cherokee, Chickasaw and Seminoles as one of the Five Civilised Tribes: those considered to have acquired at least some Euro-American values, and attempted forms of integration with the Americans.

The Mi'kmaq remained under British authority. Half a century earlier their Acadian compatriots, friends and sometime allies had been forcibly removed shortly after the defeat and desertion of the French from the territory. The Mi'kmaq had supported the American rebels during the Revolution, with some individuals even briefly joining the Continental Army.⁴ After decades of warfare with the British the prospect to exact retribution was attractive, particularly given the enduring conflict over land use. In agreement with the British, the Mi'kmaq had hoped for more equitable land management, with settlers growing

² Calloway, *The American Revolution in Indian Country*, p44; Greg O'Brien, *Choctaws in a Revolutionary Age, 1750-1830* (University of Nebraska Press 2002), p10-11.

³ For example, Iroquoian Joseph Brant worked hard to shape positive relations with Americans but found that the incessant land-hunger of settlers thwarted any real chance of equitable Indian-white relations. See Alan Taylor, *The Divided Ground: Indians, Settlers, and the Northern Borderland of the American Revolution* (New York 2006).

⁴ Treaty of Watertown, July 19th 1776; Colin G. Calloway (ed), *Dawnland Encounters: Indians and Europeans in Northern New England* (University Press of New England 1991), p173.

crops and the Mi'kmaq hunting their traditional lands and seacoast regions.⁵ However, in 1784 the western part of Acadia was separated and became the province of New Brunswick, thus officially separating the Nova Scotia territory from the mainland. Consolidation of British power combined with large numbers of loyalist refugees flooding into the Nova Scotia after the Revolution put increased pressure on land resources. By 1786 an extra 15,000 refugees had arrived in the colony, and the overwhelming population increase had made it impossible for the Mi'kmaq to enforce treaty obligations regarding land use. Considerably weakened and with few options, and without the immense power and population of the Creeks, the Mi'kmaq sought refuge in other parts of British Canada, in remote areas of Cape Breton and in Newfoundland. Those left behind were few in numbers, and those who chose to live visibly and within white areas of influence made some efforts to adopt British-European values.

By the end of the eighteenth century, then, the Mi'kmaq had shown little interest in the “civilizing” imperatives so vigorously pursued by Americans towards their Indian neighbours. Long accustomed to the strategies of Catholic missionaries, the Mi'kmaq had become familiar with patriarchal households when Indian women had moved join their Acadian husbands. They had assumed some of the habits and dress of the French, and attended a Christian church – albeit Catholic. Under British control, the Mi'kmaq faced similar encouragements from the Anglican Church, who urged Indian children to attend schools, convert to Protestantism and learn English.⁶

⁵ Geoffrey Plank, *An Unsettled Conquest: The British Campaign Against the Peoples of Acadia* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004), p163.

⁶ Letters from the Bishop of Nova Scotia, Charles Inglis, in 1792 revealed that the Mi'kmaq families who remained had developed an interest in farming and education, and that their “prejudices” towards Protestantism were declining. Journals and Letter books of Charles Inglis, first Bishop of Nova Scotia, Charles Inglis Papers 1755-98, Microfilm reel A-709 (transcript on reel C2227), LAC. Population figures for Nova Scotia at the start of the eighteenth century, compiled by French missionary Antoine Gaulin included only the islands of Cape Breton and Nova Scotia, rather than the extended Mi'kmaq population in New Brunswick and further afield. Population figures were 842. Other estimates suggest that by 1761, the population of Nova Scotia was 4000 Mi'kmaq and 8000 people of European descent. John G. Reid (ed), *The 'Conquest' of Acadia, 1710: Imperial, Colonial, and Aboriginal Constructions* (Torontot 2004), p87-88; Charles A. Martijn, “Early Mikmaq Presence in Southern Newfoundland: An Ethnohistorical Perspective, c.1500-1763”, *Newfoundland and Labrador Studies*, Vol 19, No 1: The New Early Modern Newfoundland: Part 2 (2003); Reid, J., *Myth, Symbol and Colonial Encounter: British and Mi'kmaq in Acadia, 1700-1867* (Ottawa 1995). Plank, *An Unsettled Conquest*, p69-70; Anne-Christine Hornborg, *Mi'kmaq Landscapes: From Animism to Sacred Ecology* (Hampshire, England 2008) p7; Knox, J. *The Journal of Captain John Knox: An Historical Journal of the Campaign in North America* (1914).

Within the civilising imperatives came prescriptive behaviours for Indian women, men and children, all following a more idealised Euro-American model that preferred a submissive and feminine wife, an independent and proud father, a dutiful daughter and a loyal son.

In the Southeast, agents such as Benjamin Hawkins were dispatched in 1796 on behalf of George Washington to redefine gender roles, encourage male participation in farming, and persuade women of the benefits of “household manufactures”. Such a move required women to surrender traditional matrilineal rights and submit to husbandly authority, whilst simultaneously reducing the value of masculine warrior culture to the Creeks. For men, the consolation for the loss of warrior status was control over the family, land and property. In this way the Indian spirit could be tamed into something more akin to their American neighbours to create productive citizens.⁷

Despite British and American assertions that the Indian groups required “civilising” in order to fully receive the benefits accorded to citizens, both Indian nations had considerable experience in adapting and adopting white values throughout the century. For the Creeks and the Mi'kmaq, the earliest steps in transitioning from Indian to ‘white’ involved the manner in which each group impressed new Indian or cultural values upon the next generation. For the Creeks, Indian women had often allowed the white father’s name to take precedence over the mother’s clan name, for example, and for the Mi'kmaq the adoption of the Roman Catholic faith had indicated the extent to which Indians were prepared to accept and modify white customs and beliefs. Within these changes the role of children was implicit: a white man’s name gave the child ‘legitimacy’ in both cultures allowing the next generation to manoeuvre comfortably in both worlds, and the spiritual role of women in Catholicism resonated with the Mi'kmaq customs that dictated how children should respond to forms of leadership, and how to comply with cultural mores.

For the British and the Americans, the role of Indian children in society had featured within many travel journals and accounts, sometimes as a simple, one-line observation, or in the case of the Jesuits as more detailed descriptions. Not all accounts were judgemental of the children’s behaviour. Some simply described appearance or the action of a child, but many commented on the Indian manner of child-rearing as something less than desirable.

⁷ For a more detailed discussion of the impact of the “civilisation” imperative see Chapter 4 on Marriage, and Saunt, *A New Order of Things*, p139-140, 153.

Each description helps create a picture that illustrates the position and role of the child in Indian society. Therefore, discussing children as a separate chapter allows a deeper examination of Indian customs and closer scrutiny of the enduring fears of Euro-American societies, many of which were evident in their discussions of Indian children. Children may have appeared only on the periphery of observation but, much like examining the role of women, the lowest profile members of these societies became a field in which the merits of various social principles – both Indian and white – could be argued, displayed, dismissed or enforced.

Observers commented on violent customs that included the execution of children and infanticide, which were often used as evidence of the lower nature of Indian peoples. Given the focus of this thesis, the role of violence in child rearing plays a large part in understanding how such customs were instilled in children and adults. This analysis is also used to help provide a new perspective on other behaviours where children appeared briefly in the historical record. These include sexual activity, marriage, and adolescent pressures and adult expectations of children. In this chapter, the value of children to their communities is also assessed, and pays attention to the practice of infanticide. While not a disciplinary measure, it is intended to show that within three months of birth – or even before birth – children could be the recipients of violent custom.

This chapter will use British and American commentary as a means of locating the role of children among Indian peoples. It will examine the Indians' publicly-endorsed behaviour towards children – a mirror that reflected real and genuine fears of white populations regarding their own moral values. It begins with a brief survey of the literature regarding white child-rearing customs, followed by a breakdown of different aspects of Indian violence that specifically concerned children and adolescents. These include an assessment of children as victims of violence, and the value they offered to their communities. It then looks at children as participants in aggressive acts, the indulgence shown to children and its contrast with the rite-of-passage *Huskanaw*, the moment when children transformed from dependents to young adults. Similar to Indian women, Indian children left no written records but appear through the interpretations of mostly white male observers. As far as possible, any emotive subjectivity has been accounted for and incorporated in the analysis.

Infanticide, abortion and selective reproduction

The experiences of colonial settler children in America are subject to a good deal of scholarship that reveals an array of contexts in which they lived their young lives. Several historians have tackled the issue of infanticide to explore purposes and meaning behind the choices women made, while others have studied the manner in which children were disciplined and rewarded.⁸ Anne-Marie Kilday's wide-ranging work on infanticide covered British patterns of child-murder from 1600 to the present day. She states that, "In Britain, Europe and North America, by the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, 'popular' attitudes to infanticide were clear, consistent and unremitting. Women who committed new-born child murder were routinely condemned with abhorrence and regarded as despicable, malevolent and monstrous."⁹ This conclusion is emphasised by historians such as Anna Mae Duane who added that, "infanticide, as many postcolonial scholars have pointed out, circulates as a near-universal trope for barbarity in contact zones through out the globe". Her work lends additional perspectives on the creation of mental states and attitudes of children as deliberately cultivated by the parents, a theme reinforced by Philip Greven who claimed that for many colonial parents, the breaking of the child's wills was crucial to producing good citizens or, more importantly, obedient children.¹⁰ Studies on the role of children in courts have shown a deliberate shift through the eighteenth century in response to intellectual discourse over reason and responsibility. Children benefited from this as severe punishments, including death, gave way to increased leniency and greater consideration of age in sentencing patterns.¹¹

The views on child-murder, infanticide and criminal activity by white people are abundant within the record and display social anxieties. However, it is much harder to amass solid data on Native American children. They lived relatively sheltered from day-to-day colonial affairs of white people and did not attract the attention of writers to the same degree that women or warriors may have found their moves scrutinised and discussed. In fact, unless a

⁸ See Philip J. Greven, *Children in Colonial America*, for a broad overview (New York 2007). Also, Klepp in McGaw, *Early American Technology*, for an analysis of practical concerns surrounding children and birth.

⁹ Anne-Marie Kilday, *A History of Infanticide in Britain, c. 1600 to the Present* (Hampshire 2013), p41.

¹⁰ Anna Mae Duane, *Suffering Childhood in Early America: Violence, Race, and the Making of the Child Victim* (Athens: university of Georgia Press 2010), p58-59; Philip Greven, 'Breaking Wills in Colonial America', in Anya Jabour *Major Problems in the History of American Families and Children* (Belmont, CA, 2005), p86-96.

¹¹ Holly Brewer, *By Birth or Consent: Children, law, & the Anglo-American Revolution in Authority* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press 2005).

reflection of some aspect of Indian women's lives, children receive relatively little attention in their own right until traders begin to have children with Indian women. As a result, historiography is limited. However, some research has illustrated that in settler minds, Indians and child-rearing issues were related. For example, Anna Mae Duane successfully connected the dots, showing that anxieties regarding the vulnerability of children were intimately connected to fears over Indian-white relations. Essentially, the concept of the child was manipulated to articulate colonists' fears of weakness and redefined power structures. Such an observation offers at least some insight into criticisms of Indian child-rearing customs, many of which revealed the prejudices against – and the advantages of – Indian customs. Sadly, the sources regarding Indian children do not match the quantity and consistency of Euro-American records. However, a survey of a large cross-section of primary material reveals some patterns regarding the personal autonomy often enjoyed by Indian children and – like white settlers – the expectations placed upon them by family and community members. The study of children is revealing of course, particularly regarding Native American customs, but its primary purpose here is to provide another context in which to understand the development, behaviour and choices of Indian women.

While observers were often appalled at many aspects of Indian violence, the horror acted as a vent for anxieties on two fronts. On the one hand it justified white displacement of Indian peoples under the rubric of 'civilising' or exterminating such savage people. On the other, it allowed settlers to claim a higher moral ground than indigenous populations, for while settler colonies also inflicted atrocities upon children, their own laws actively forbade many such practices.¹² White and Indian men were no strangers to frontier killing, of course, and children suffered routinely in war at the hands of vengeful enemies. However, the Indian public acceptance of infanticide was repellent and unnatural to many white people, and the moral distaste lay in the fact that Europeans punished such acts where Indian attached no social censure to child-killing. The laws surrounding legitimacy and the validity of an infant's life provided 'civility' to the assessment of child murder: both male and female could be punished for the taking of the child's life (women increasingly bore the burden of the crime, however). Although 'infant' was a commonly-used term to describe children, based on English law, infanticide was the deliberate killing

¹² Samuel Roberts, *A Digest of Select British Statutes, Comprising Those Which, according to the Report of the Judges of the Supreme Court, made to the Legislature, Appear to be in Force, in Pennsylvania: With Some Others, with Notes and Illustrations* (Pittsburgh, 1817), p90-93.

of a 'viable' child.¹³ A woman could only avoid a guilty verdict if she could prove that her child had been still-born. Uncertainty concerning this matter was clarified by experts and other knowledgeable women who would declare whether it was indeed misfortune or proof of murder.¹⁴ Any attempt to conceal the pregnancy and birth (also a crime) only compounded the likelihood that woman would be found guilty.¹⁵ In addition, infanticide cases among Europeans and colonists overwhelmingly involved young, single, unmarried women. Many were in domestic service, living with parents, or from poor socio-economic backgrounds, and it was not considered a common crime among married women.¹⁶ Thus evidence of their immoral sexual liaisons was also put on trial. Furthermore, charges of bastardy could be levelled against the woman, a law intended to prevent the child becoming an economic burden on the parish.¹⁷ Essentially a raft of laws bound female identity and pregnancy to complex ideas of morality, sexuality, economic status and social class.

Despite some contemporary moral anxieties that infanticide was becoming an epidemic, historians concur that the actual amount of child-murders far outweighed those that ever came to trial, and over the eighteenth century prosecutions declined in Britain at least.¹⁸ In Philadelphia in the latter half of the eighteenth century, less than half of infanticide cases resulted in a guilty verdict. Of those found guilty, 33% were executed.¹⁹ In Britain, no-one was executed for infanticide after 1776.²⁰ Infants discovered in shallow graves or left to exposure indicated that despite the law's best efforts, many infanticide cases never actually reached the courts.²¹ It seemed that women, burdened by social pressures that policed their

¹³ Had enjoyed a separate existence from the mother, not still-born or miscarried. Kilday, *A History of Infanticide*, p152.

¹⁴ Klepp in McGaw, p70-78. In France it was illegal to conceal a pregnancy, thus reducing any chance a woman may have had to end the pregnancy discreetly without attracting prosecution. Charles Gayarre, *History of Louisiana, The French Domination*, (New York 1867), p383.

¹⁵ Pennsylvania: Merril D. Smith, ' "Unnatural Mothers" Infanticide, Motherhood, and Class in the Mid-Atlantic, 1730-1830' in Christine Daniels, Michael V. Kennedy (ed), *Over the Threshold: Intimate Violence in Early America* (New York 1999), p173.

¹⁶ Kilday, *A History of Infanticide*, p24, 39-40; G. S. Rowe and J. D. Marietta in 'Personal Violence in a Peaceable Kingdom' in *Over the Threshold*, p33.

¹⁷ In many cases the prosecution was obliged to prove that the "callous" mother had *planned* to kill the child. Rowe and Marietta, 'Personal Violence in a Peaceable Kingdom', p33; Kilday, *A History of Infanticide*, p24. Smith, "Unnatural Mothers", p33, 37. England: "Bastardy Act of 1610 stated that the mother of an illegitimate child could be imprisoned for up to one year by order of the Justices of the Peace if she burdened a parish with a chargeable bastard".

¹⁸ Rowe and Marietta, 'Personal Violence in a Peaceable Kingdom', p33; Kilday, *A History of Infanticide*, p25, 47.

¹⁹ Rowe and Marietta, 'Personal Violence in a Peaceable Kingdom', p33.

²⁰ Kilday, *A History of Infanticide*, p47.

²¹ Kilday, *A History of Infanticide*, p85; Rowe and Marietta, 'Personal Violence in a Peaceable Kingdom', p32-33. Kilday states that popular attitudes towards infanticide were unforgiving in Britain and North America, p41. However, Rowe and Marietta state that in parts of the colonies,

sexual encounters, choices and economic opportunities, sought alternative means to regulate their bodies and lives, outwith the constraints of law and patriarchal oversight. The crime of infanticide then was often invisible in colonial towns. It was gender-specific, its secrecy and the ability of women to thwart the law pointing to a duplicitous, deceptive nature if caught. Furthermore, as the sole bearers of male progeny women challenged the levels of control men could exert upon their bodies. As one historian claimed, “pregnancy itself emerged as a powerful, and potentially threatening, battleground for patriarchal privilege”.²²

Compared to the above, the Indian custom appears simple and straightforward, lacking any social, moral, masculine or community involvement in the woman’s decision. Women had only one restriction upon their choice to commit infanticide. According to Cherokee ethnographer James Mooney, they were permitted to kill their child within a short period of the birth – a matter of a few weeks or months. Another observer added, “the mother...has the power of life and death over the one to whom she has just given birth, during the first moon following her delivery. After this time has expired, if she were to kill him, she herself would be punished by death.”²³ For settlers accustomed to detailed regulation over infanticide, the apparent absence of laws surrounding the killing of an Indian infant by Indian women would have appeared as the very opposite of civilised and lacking an obvious moral framework in which to understand the act. For those living among native populations, the question of infanticide was addressed by several observers who assessed the custom from within these legal constructs, commenting on its long existence and the primary role of women in the act.²⁴ Very few observers, however, were witness to the act itself. Given the extensive separation between male and female activities, it was unlikely that the primarily male observers would have been allowed to be present at such a distinctly female occasion. As a result, the method of dispatch of the child was not

jurors virtually never found women guilty of infanticide unless the prosecution established callous intent, p33.

²² Duane, *Suffering Childhood in Early America*, p106. The nineteenth century saw new controls being implemented over exposure and abandonment, such as an increase in foundling hospitals and new laws against the practice. See Kilday, *A History of Infanticide*, Chapter 5, Changing Attitudes to Infanticide.

²³ James Edward Oglethorpe, *A New and Accurate Account of the Provinces of South-Carolina and Georgia: With Many Curious and Useful Observations on the Trade, Navigation and Plantations of Great-Britain, Compared with Her Most Powerful Maritime Neighbours in Antient and Modern Times* (London 1732); Ed. Frans M. Olbrechts (ed), James Mooney, *The Swimmer Manuscript, Cherokee Sacred Formulas and Medicinal Prescriptions* (Washington 1932); Milfort, Louis Le Clerc, *Memoirs or a Quick Glance at my Various Travels and my Sojourn in the Creek Nation* (Paris: 1802), J. F. McDermott (ed), p175.

²⁴ John Haywood, *The Natural and Aboriginal History of Tennessee* (Nashville 1823). Creek Laws by 1831 had banned infanticide. Chilly McIntosh, Laws of the Creek Nation 7th January 1823, Keith Read Manuscript Collection, Hargrett Rare Books and Manuscript Collection, University of Georgia, MS 921, Box 2.

discussed in detail. In addition, the possibility of unspoken rules that may have been passed from woman to woman within an oral culture are also absent from the historical record.

The practice was present in the Southern colonies and also among the Mi'kmaq of Nova Scotia but the purposes behind Indian infanticide remain elusive. It does not appear to follow the pattern of many European peoples where it may have served to reduce the amount of mouths to feed in times of economic stress, for gender reasons (girls were often unwanted), or inheritance reasons.²⁵ For example, Cornelia Hughes Dayton in her article on abortion in early New England describes the actions of one suitor who was aghast to find his lover was pregnant, a child and ill-timed marriage likely to affect his inheritance prospects.²⁶ The story surrounding the ensuing death of his lover after an abortion at seven months demonstrated the wide range of politics and social concerns associated with pregnancy such as potential family unions, unplanned marriages, the secretive procurement of abortifacients (the 'trade') and attempts by the father to evade his paternal responsibilities.

In her studies Anne-Marie Kilday identified four possible motivations for infanticide. Reinforcing the themes described above, they are: economic factors; shame and isolation; malicious intent; and medical or psychosocial problems.²⁷ Regarding Indian women, the first two can be assessed with some certainty, and an assessment of medical problems regarding the *child* can be made. Malicious intent of Indian women is harder to ascertain, as are psychosocial problems amongst indigenous people. In economic terms, food resources may have played a part in infanticide decisions. For example, the Mi'kmaq lived primarily off fish and meat with additional seasonal fruit, and were proficient hunters. However, animal resources were also seasonal and could not be managed to the same degree as Southeastern agricultural nations, which could store surplus foods. Added to the Mi'kmaq custom of giving food generously, accumulating surplus was difficult. Without surplus, extended families could not be supported with the same reliability as agricultural or semi-agricultural nations. The missionary Abbé Maillard stationed among the Mi'kmaq also emphasised the dependency on hunting – as such, the nature of food procurement was precarious in bad years or when stock had depleted due to fur trade hunting. Constant

²⁵ Kilday, *A History of Infanticide*, p3-4.

²⁶ Cornelia Hughes Dayton, 'Taking the Trade: Abortion and Gender Relations in an Eighteenth-Century New England Village', *The William and Mary Quarterly*, (Jan 1991).

²⁷ Kilday, *A History of Infanticide*, p153.

seasonal movement also made it difficult to store foodstuffs.²⁸ The Mi'kmaq were certainly resourceful but lacked the bounty of Southern agricultural areas, which may have presented a practical reason for the existence of the custom. In the Southeast, harvests were often plentiful with enough food to feed growing populations. Thus, the birth of children was often a reason for celebration, and a woman could increase her desirability as a partner by proving her fertility – the environment, nature, culture and custom supported it. Therefore, for the Mi'kmaq economic reason could inform infanticide decisions. For the Southeastern groups it was less probable.

Concepts of shame regarding pregnancy did not affect Indian peoples that this author has been able to discover. Ideas of paternal legitimacy did not concern them, either.

No censure was attached to her pre-marital sexual activities and girls need not have worried about charges of impurity or moral chastity. Furthermore, in the matrilineal clans of the Southeast such as the Creeks, where birthright was attached to the female lineage, gender of the child was not a concern and provided no reason for killing the infant. Therefore, “correct” male bloodlines and paternity were not necessarily a concern. It is not until the latter half of the century that women began to consider paternity – particularly white paternity – as an enhancement to Indian traditions. Female children were not a burden upon parents who struggled under patriarchal laws that imposed a financial duty upon parents or suitors. In addition, women, as food-procurers with a spiritual authority derived from the land, held a powerful place in many Indian cultures. Having a baby out of wedlock, or the child of more than one man, was not a reason to commit infanticide in the Southeast. The practise of infanticide was connected strongly to the Indian belief that a woman’s body was hers alone to do with as she wished: “as for the young girls, they are the mistresses of their own bodies (to use their own expression)”.²⁹ Bodily autonomy was a source of pride and sceptical travellers attested to this, describing a lack of “moral” control exercised by women who chose to have sexual intercourse with men in exchange for goods. This did not appear to worry the woman’s parents or prospective suitors, and consequently did not trouble women. There was no shame to be found in childbirth.

Medical concerns may have factored into women’s decisions on infanticide. One possible reason was that the child’s chances of survival were small and that s/he lacked the robust

²⁸ For an assessment of hunting in Nova Scotia in the eighteenth century see Jeffrey L. McNairn, ‘Meaning and Markets: Hunting, Economic Development and British Imperialism in Maritime Travel Narratives to 1870’, *Acadiensis, Journal of the History of the Atlantic Region*, Vol. 34, No. 2 (Spring 2005), p3-25.

²⁹ Journal of Diron D’Artaguiette, Inspector General of Louisiana, 1720, in Newton D. Mereness (ed), *Travels in the American Colonies*, (New York 1916), p73.

physique required for life in Indian territories. Many observers routinely commented on the strong physiques of Indian peoples, their straight limbs and backs, with an absence of “deformity” that plagued the less healthy city dwellers on the European continent. John Lawson said, “There are found very few, or scarce any, Deformed, or Cripples, amongst them.” He added, “The Christian Natives of Carolina are a straight, clean-limb'd People; the Children being seldom or never troubled with Rickets, or those other Distempers, that the Europeans are visited withal. 'Tis next to a Miracle, to see one of them deform'd in Body.”³⁰ Travellers such as Bernard Romans and William Bartram also praised the physiques of Southeastern peoples, declaring them “well shaped, so as generall to form a perfect human figure.”³¹ Much of this could be attributed to the use of the cradleboard for infants, used from birth for the first several months of its life. The child, snugly fastened into a specially-crafted wooden box, was carried around by its mother, with only the space for bodily eliminations opened and cleaned with the use of moss.³² The child, its arms and legs strapped in place, avoided crooked limbs in this manner. This was commonplace practice, and extended to vanity ‘strapping’ for peoples such as the Flatheads (Choctaws) of the Southeast, who specially flattened infants’ heads as an indication of status.³³

Given the nature of indigenous lifestyles, strong-bodied physiques were highly desired by Indians and two pieces of evidence bear this out. The Cherokee birthing process, with males present, indicates that incantations and chants spoke by male and female were focused on the strength and power of the new-born.³⁴ It was natural for parents to hope for the best health of their child but the incantations speak to specific physical requirements held in high regard by the tribe. This is supported by accounts by James Adair who described the types of animal skin that Southeastern peoples wrapped their infants in, in the hope that the child would absorb the powers and physical attributes of the animal:

Their male children they chuse to raise on the skins of panthers, on account of the communicative principle, which they reckon all nature is possest of, in conveying

³⁰ Romans, *A Concise Natural History*, p29, Lawson, John Lawson, *A New Voyage to Carolina; Containing the Exact Description and Natural History of That Country: Together with the Present State Thereof* (London 1709), p84, 173.

³¹ Waselkov, Braund (eds), Bartram, *On the Southeastern Indians*, (Lincoln, London: University of Nebraska Press, 1995), p78, 111.

³² G. H. Loskiel, *History of the Mission of the United Brethren Among the Indians in North America* (London 1794), p61-62. Loskiel claimed that the practice could result in the deaths of children and was therefore “universally detested”. John Lawson, *A New Voyage*, p190.

³³ Lawson, *A New Voyage*, p33, 34, 84; Romans, *A Concise Natural History*, p47, 56; Adair, *History*, p284; Bartram, *On the Southeastern Indians*, p129.

³⁴ Theda Perdue suggests that infanticide was a means of population control. However, she aligns this with a discussion of the physical strength of children also.: *Cherokee Women*, p32-33.

qualities according to the regimen that is followed: and, as the panther is endued with many qualities, beyond any of his fellow animals in the American woods, as smelling, strength, cunning, and a prodigious spring, they reckon such a bed is the first rudiments of war.

“They change the regimen in nurturing their young females,” Adair added. “These they lay on the skins of fawns, or buffalo calves, because they are shy and timorous.”³⁵ Adair’s description of appropriate female attributes may not be accurate. There is little evidence that docility was a desirable trait in women; quite the opposite appears to have been the case. Therefore, it is more likely that the skins of fawns and female animals were used to encourage fertility, abundance and provision – the deer prior to European contact provided clothing, horn, bone, tools, needles, bags and purses, moccasins, grease, fat and meat. The Huskanaw ceremony, practised by many eastern seaboard Indians, was a rite of passage designed to test the physical and mental skills of the adolescent, and the desire to create children with certain emotional and physical characteristics was evident.³⁶

Indian communities sought strong, mentally robust children to lead the next generation, and it is conceivable that the creation of such adults began at birth with no public censure: after all, it was in the best interest of the community to have strong children. The decision to end a young, fragile life was acceptable. The fact that the decision also rested in female hands – supported by Indian law – may have added to its repugnance for western observers.³⁷ To Euro-Americas so accustomed to policing women’s bodies, the power endowed to Indian women undermined the apparent necessity of infanticide, devalued its significance and imbued it with a speciousness reserved especially for women. It is little wonder that few observers sought to dig below the surface of the custom.

The absence of manly authority over a woman’s body and her child leaves space for speculation. How did one order a society without these definite, patriarchal parameters? In the Southeast, it was not so different, but rather ordered along a different allocation of powers. Where Euro-American men owned female bodies (and their biological offspring),

³⁵ Adair, *History*, p420.

³⁶ Loskiel, *History of the Mission*, p63; Adair, *History* p102, 144, 429, 430; Romans, *A Concise Natural History*, p51.

³⁷ The Creeks later reversed this custom, declaring it illegal in the nineteenth century. Chilly McIntosh, *Laws of the Creek Nation*, 7th January 1823, Keith Read Manuscript Collection, Hargrett Rare Books and Manuscript Collection, UGA, MS 921 BOX 2.

Indian women owned their own.³⁸ Where white men held authority over children, instead, Southeastern women fulfilled this responsibility; and where men stood at the head of the family unit, women did so instead at the head of a larger, extended family.³⁹ It would therefore logically follow that serious decisions regarding infant viability and killing would also defer to the woman. The giver of life was perhaps the most appropriate to take the life, especially when so close to the time of the birth. The idea that the child may still have been connected to the mother – or even still part of the mother – has not been explored. In fact, piecing together the accounts, there is enough evidence to speculate that children may well have remained part of something else (as opposed to ‘owned’), maybe part of the mother, until s/he had achieved full independence in the eyes of the community. Essentially, children were “othered”; not yet fully engaged in the tribe and viewed as takers rather than contributors. In a culture that determined status based on contribution to tribal success and safety, this would make some sense. In addition, other observer accounts do indicate that human connections extended far beyond the physical world, such as those between husband and wife, or at the time of death.⁴⁰

The extent of authority and faith placed in female judgement over such a potentially devastating and powerful action reveals much about the grave decisions a woman could be expected to make in her lifetime. Such an act would be expected of a 14-year-old mother also, perhaps in consultation with her elders. The rules governing actions such as ritual torture and death customs were predicated on the absence or presence of the soul: the ejection of the enemy soul from the tortured captive, and the pacification of angry deceased tribal members; seeking the correct physical vessel from captives to hold the lingering soul of recently departed loved ones; and even restrictions on female movements of recent widows as domestic obligations were fulfilled by the husband’s soul.⁴¹ For the Creeks, people had two spirits: one occupying the head or heart, the other (ghost) the intestines. Upon death, the ghost may linger near the burial site, bereft of a body to occupy.⁴² This spirit would remain angry until revenge for his or her death had been sought, particularly those who had been scalped.⁴³ In such cases, a tortured captive

³⁸ Rape in Early America, Christine Stansell in, *City of Women: Sex and Class in New York, 1789-1860* (New York, 1986); Romans, *A Concise Natural History*, p97.

³⁹ Female matrilineal authority differed from patriarchal authority in its preference for power-sharing, rather than total control over all familial customs. L. Stone, *Kinship and Gender: an Introduction* (Boulder, CO.: Westview Press, 1997).

⁴⁰ Adair, *History*, p189, 215.

⁴¹ Loskiel, *A History of the Nation*, p39, 41; Bill Grantham, *Creation Myths and Legends of the Creek Indians* (University Press of Florida 2002), p38-39, 41.

⁴² Grantham, *Creation Myths*, p39.

⁴³ Grantham, *Creation Myths*, p41.

provided the means of release as the captive was assigned the soul of the deceased – or “adopted” along with all the privileges of that person – and allowed the spirit to inhabit the body until ready to depart. Therefore, many captives who found they had been spared torture found only a brief respite, sometimes delivered back to the women at a later date. Far from being a fickle act, the custom suggested that the women had fulfilled their duty in securing justice and aiding the deceased into the spirit world.

These examples indicate that for native peoples, the souls and the body were interlinked – and that if a soul could be without a body, then a body could certainly be without a soul. For example, Creek myths depict the travel of humans into the spirit world to retrieve souls, particularly those who had departed their human host unexpectedly, thus leading to illness.⁴⁴ Southeastern myths show that men featured predominantly in journeying to the spirit worlds.⁴⁵ However, the particular role of women in death rituals involved sitting with the deceased’s body, singing, preparing graves, carrying burial goods or preparing bodies.⁴⁶ In addition, through torture women often acted as the intermediaries between life and death. It is reasonable, then, to surmise that at the time of death or birth, a child may have either yet to receive a soul or was deemed born without the correct soul, perhaps one incompatible with the particular nation.⁴⁷ Therefore, as someone accustomed to making decisions regarding life, death, torture and survival, the mother was perhaps the best equipped of the sexes to perform infanticide, especially if she was a ‘spiritual specialist’.⁴⁸ The responsibilities attached to life and death matters strongly indicate that women conducted the passage of souls from the material to the spiritual worlds and vice versa, the conduit between life and death.

Beyond spirituality, some women’s decisions regarding infanticide may have been based in very practical concerns, especially regarding fathers. John Lawson explained that some younger women were mocked for giving birth to the children of traders.

...they scarce ever have a Child; (for they have an Art to destroy the Conception, and she that brings a Child in this Station, is accounted a Fool, and her Reputation is lessen'd thereby)

⁴⁴ Grantham, *Creation Myths*, p38-43.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ John Reid Swanton, *Early History of the Creek Indians and their Neighbours*, p372-373.

⁴⁷ Among colonial women in this period, a foetus was not considered to have a soul until the ‘quickenings’, around 18-20 weeks. Kilday, *A History of Infanticide*, p79.

⁴⁸ Grantham, *Creation Myths*, p45-50.

This suggested a preference for the ‘correct’ child who became a tool to also reject any ties with the trader.⁴⁹ Of course, some traders were preferable to others, as were some children.⁵⁰ Creek women such as Sehoy Marchand who married established and settled traders, certainly displayed different attitudes to their sons and daughters. Her daughters to influential trader Lachlan McGillivray, Sophia and Jeannet, remained with her in Creek country as adolescents whereas her son, Alexander McGillivray, was educated as a young man in South Carolina where he remained for a number of years. The son of a Scottish trader, Lachlan, Alexander was also a member of the powerful Wind Clan on his mother’s side. His education only reinforced his standing and diplomatic skills, allowing him to become a powerful negotiator at the end of the eighteenth century as the Southeastern nations asserted their status in the face of increasing land encroachments. Education or not, Alexander was a valuable asset as a future chief simply through his mother’s status alone.⁵¹

Given the fluctuating fortunes of the colonies throughout the century, and the extent of interracial sexual relations, infants and the unborn could potentially be an inconvenience and were expendable at times. Despite the differences between settler and Indian women, on this matter they shared a common bond. The use of herbal abortifacients to induce miscarriage were used by both Indian and settler women, as was the custom of breastfeeding to delay conception.⁵² And although both groups of women emerged from societies that valued childbirth and child-rearing, it seemed that women contested the constraints that extended motherhood brought. Janet Farrell Brodie provides details of white women viewing impending motherhood as ‘slavery’, welcoming miscarriage, and resisting pressure to halt extended breastfeeding.⁵³ Likewise, many Indian women breastfed for longer periods, up to several years, naturally keeping birth rates low and avoiding the need for abortions.⁵⁴ In contrast to Southeastern women, the seventeenth

⁴⁹ Lawson, *A New Voyage*, p187.

⁵⁰ Lawson claimed that the Southeastern Congarees women esteemed “a white Man’s Child much above one of their getting”, p29. He did not give any reason for their alleged preference, however.

⁵¹ Alexander was taken by his father Lachlan to be educated and returned age around 17 to Creek country. However, the record is contradictory regarding the length of his absence. Caughey claims Alexander was away from Creek country for 10 years, while J. F. McDermott claims he was absent for only a couple of years. Waselkov states that Alexander left for South Carolina with his mother’s permission, in 1764 and returned 13 years later. In any event he certainly appears to have spent his youth with his family, remaining a respected member of the Wind Clan and was accorded appropriate status. John Walton Caughey, *McGillivray of the Creeks*, (South Carolina 2007), pxxi; Gregory A. Waselkov, *A Conquering Spirit: Fort Mims and the Redstick War of 1813-1814* (Alabama 2006). p19, 36; J. F. McDermott (ed) Milfort, *Memoirs*, p xxviii, 15.

⁵² Janet Farrell Brodie, *Contraception and Abortion in Nineteenth-Century America* (Cornell 1997), p39; Cornelia Hughes Dayton, ‘Taking the Trade’; Susan Klepp states that amongst settlers, prosecutions for use of abortifacients involved men who had forced them upon the women. Klepp in McGaw, *Early American Technology*, p74; Swimmer, p117.

⁵³ Brodie, *Contraception and Abortion*, p41, 45-46.

⁵⁴ Loskiel, *History of the Mission*, p62.

century Mi'kmaq were actively encouraged to abort children should the new life potentially affect the survival of the first child.⁵⁵ The following century, the Abbé Maillard confirmed the persistence of the custom saying that women seemed to avoid the same birth rates as other women.⁵⁶ He added,

They had too a custom amongst them, that if a woman grew pregnant whilst she was sucking a child, they obliged her to use means for procuring an abortion, in favour of the first-come, who they supposed would otherwise be defrauded of his due nourishment.⁵⁷

In his *History of the Moravian Mission*, George Henry Loskiel, a German Moravian minister, claimed that Delaware women could have up to six children, rarely more, and stopped producing them before the age of 30.⁵⁸ Assuming girls would be married around the age of 14 (sometimes younger, sometimes older), this gave a child-bearing range of 12-16 years, a child every 18 months to two years. It is highly probable that women would continue to be fertile long past the age of 30 and so one could assume an active choice to abort, practice abstinence, or breastfeed. Maillard stated that the absence of “prolific” Mi'kmaq childbearers was puzzling given their frequent menses. He found the Mi'kmaq's lack of children not just perplexing but also a problem, adding, “One would think the plurality of wives permitted amongst them, might in some measure compensate for this defect...”⁵⁹

The ‘defect’ may have been intentional. In 1739 a set of rules were drawn up on Île Royale to establish conduct that was acceptable to both Indian and soldiers at the fort of Louisbourg.⁶⁰ These rules covered issues of violence, including appropriate behaviour towards family members. In 1740, Francois le Coutre De Bourville, naval officer and temporary commander in the absence of the governor, reported that the rules were being enforced. He reported that one woman was “in the habit of destroying her babies”. When

⁵⁵ Nicolas Denys, *The Description and Natural History of the Coasts of North America*, W. Ganong (ed) (Toronto 1908), p404.

⁵⁶ Maillard, *An account of the customs and manners of the Micmakis*, p50.

⁵⁷ Maillard, *An account of the customs and manners of the Micmakis*, p36.

⁵⁸ Loskiel, *History of the Mission*, p61. Loskiel's *History* was based on information compiled by missionary David Zeisberger who spent many years with the Lenape, or Delaware. Earl P. Olmstead, *Blackcoats Among the Delaware: David Zeisberger on the Ohio Frontier*, (Kent State University Press, Ohio 1991), p178.

⁵⁹ Maillard, *An account of the customs and manners of the Micmakis*, p50-51.

⁶⁰ Olive Patricia Dickason, *Louisbourg and the Indians: a Study in Imperial Race Relations*, LAC R64-81/1976-6m, E92 .D53 1971. Ottawa archives, PAC MG1 F³ article 95, p. 35 for the laws: *Reglements faits par les chefs sauvages de l'Isle Royale, de Nartigonneiche tenu au Port Toulouse pour la distribution des presents*, 9 July, 1739.

she repeated the offence in the spring of 1740, she was whipped by the Indians at the door to the church.⁶¹ Although the incident has small proportions within the violent history of Louisbourg, it raises many questions whilst simultaneously shedding some light on the customs of Indian women. For one, the woman was punished only after repeating her offence but had not been punished prior to this. What were her reasons? Limited food resources? A bad relationship with the father? Did no-one object to her behaviour prior to this incident? Her repeated offences also suggested that she was becoming pregnant regularly and was therefore most likely married. Women who could not get pregnant were either offered children to raise or engaged in regular sex with unmarried men.⁶² This woman's 'habit' also indicates that she felt little concern regarding her actions.

Whatever her reasons, the woman features as one of the earliest casualties of a conscious effort to redefine female authority regarding reproductive rights and customs, thereby undermining their pivotal role in determining population numbers – perhaps even the potential to skew gender balances within the Indian towns. The simple set of rules was to have a direct impact on the extent that women could exercise complete autonomy over another life. Furthermore, the rules were established, apparently by Indian males, to enhance trade agreements. However, both the Abbé Maillard and his protégé the Abbé Le Loutre had claimed that their missionary work was being undermined by the Mi'kmaq chiefs' reluctance to punish the crimes.⁶³ There was little reason for Indian chiefs to initiate such a rule that was so important and relevant to the survival of their people in a hostile climate. Although speculative, it is probable that the inclusion of this rule within the trade talk was at the instigation of the French attendees, and only under pressure were the Mi'kmaq willing to enforce it.

The active and conscientious undermining of female authority and decision-making was not necessarily intended to subvert female authority per se, but to redirect that authority from one that was violent and destructive (in European Catholic missionary eyes) to one that was morally upright, nurturing and benevolent: much more appropriate to the Roman Catholic faith that the Mi'kmaq were understood to practice, and far more in line with the aspirational image of the Virgin Mary. For the women, the child was an inconvenience. For the French missionaries, the infant was a means to realise the intentions of the Catholic

⁶¹ Ibid c¹¹bVol 22. p118-124, 26 October 1740.

⁶² The Abbé Maillard described this as forced prostitution. Maillard, *Customs of the Micmakis*, p52.

⁶³ The Abbé Le Loutre worked under the guidance of the Abbé Maillard, who described him as a diligent and enthusiastic student.

faith and its potential to advance the virtues of womanhood, no matter her origins or ‘savageness’.⁶⁴

Indian women could – and did – make decisions that were off limits to males until French interference. Furthermore, the life-and-death decisions regarding the existence of the most weak and vulnerable members of the community were ideal training for the hard decisions to come in adulthood. The realms of life and death belonged to women alone. In more ways than one, the child was the tool of transformation in a woman’s life, potentially taking her from the status of motherhood back to childless maiden in an instant. In both Mi’kmaq and Creek terms, motherhood was a part of the status and social advancement of women, and the decision to renounce that would not have been taken lightly. Maillard may not have seen much value in women’s identity beyond their procreative potential. However, the practice of infanticide and the tendency to encourage abortions when necessary also shows that indigenous womanhood was not *entirely* constructed around birthing practices and levels of fecundity.⁶⁵

Child victims of violence

Indigenous infanticide customs remain a grey area, and can only really invite speculation. However, violence towards infants certainly required appropriate boundaries by whites or Indians. Infants were frequently used as tools in warfare. In October 1744, Captain John Goreham, stationed in Nova Scotia, had led a party of rangers who had come upon a group of Mi’kmaq women and children camping in the forest. The soldiers had disembowelled the pregnant women. The act served to inflame tensions between the British and the Mi’kmaq, according to one French source, “An action which these savages cannot forget, especially as at that time they made fair war with the English. They have always looked

⁶⁴ James Edward Oglethorpe, the founder of the Colony of Georgia, briefly discussed the uses of abortifacients for the benefit of men, mostly French soldiers and – possibly – French clergy. Although his comments are a criticism of French colonial policy, he claimed that this practise was performed secretly before or after the birth, and often left the women barren. This does not appear to have been the case for Southeastern Indian trading girls who continued to have children into adulthood. James Edward Oglethorpe, *A New and Accurate Account of the Provinces of South-Carolina and Georgia: With Many Curious and Useful Observations on the Trade, Navigation and Plantations of Great-Britain, Compared with Her Most Powerful Maritime Neighbours in Antient and Modern Times* (1732), P73-74.

⁶⁵ The Abbé Maillard describes a prayer for women which expresses a desire for “prolific” wombs and breasts as productive as “inexhaustible fountains”. Given the customs of infanticide, this prayer seems incongruous. *Customs of the Micmakis*, p48.

upon this deed as a singular mark of the most unheard-of cruelty.”⁶⁶ The Mi’kmaq were no strangers to intense violence towards children, however. Therefore, the outrage felt by the them towards the British and vice versa was less concerned with the killing of children and more concerned about its validity as a war act from their respective viewpoints. The Mi’kmaq response suggested that their outrage lay in the fact that the British were first to move the boundaries of acceptable violence (rather than the act itself). For Indians, extreme violence towards children could be committed in the war field but *also* within the community, therefore endorsed by women and men alike. For settlers, Indians appeared to break violent protocols, and the lack of formal separation between war and community caused consternation and disruption.⁶⁷

The killing of children served as a lightning rod for Indian-settler tensions, allowing both sides to ascribe character flaws and traits of entire people based on perceived levels of inappropriate violence. It also served as a strong psychological message. White people certainly killed Indian children, of course, but the focus and time given to violence inflicted on children by Indians was perhaps most offensive to whites. Actions such as scalping required extended contact with a recently deceased child, perhaps sometimes still living. The action was intense, personal and tactile, and engaged many senses simultaneously: the distress of the child appeared to have no impact on the Indian warriors. It sat outwith the logical framework of European, patriarchal war practices and therefore assumed gross, monstrous proportions. In addition to the loss felt by parents, the killing of children directly involved white male issue and ‘ownership’ of children, their future contribution to the family earnings and the prospects for marriage and family unions. It was an assault on bloodlines, inheritance and other European patriarchal customs (hence the traditional exclusion of children as legitimate war targets). Indian nations would not have seen the killing of children as necessarily an attempt on the virility of settler men. For most Indians the child was viewed as being collectively ‘owned’ by the nation in question.⁶⁸ Therefore, the killing of white children was part of a wider, generalised attack on white people in addition to patriarchal practices.

⁶⁶ Anonymous, in Maillard, *Customs of the Micmakis*. Creek Redstick warriors also disembowelled a pregnant woman, completing the act by impaling the foetus. Benjamin Hawkins to Upper Creek Chief, March 25, 1813, *Collected Works*.

⁶⁷ Axtell, *The Vengeful Women of Marblehead*, discussed in Chapter 1.

⁶⁸ Antoine Bonnefoy, Journal of Antoine Bonnefoy, 1741-42, in *Travels in the American Colonies*, p249. Bonnefoy travelling among the Cherokee in the 1740s stated that children “who should be born should belong to the republic.”

Although having no intrinsic value in terms of contribution to the community until a certain age, many native children had a specific worth to Indian peoples in death, either to avoid social stigma and an unwanted attachment to a passing trader, to save food resources or to purchase higher social standing. For the Natchez Indians of the Southeast, for example, children offered value to adults in death, their sacrifice at the hands of parents ensuring noble status for ordinary people.⁶⁹ But value was also sometimes attached to enemy children, particularly in scalping. As non-combatants, Indian children rarely offered much in the way of military glory for white soldiers – vile acts were attributed to unruly men, deviants or revenge acts. But for Indian men and women, the child was fair game and the separation of captive families had little meaning for Indian warriors. After all, how could a woman be convincingly adopted or converted when in her arms lay a permanent reminder of the family and life she had left behind? Like captives who were stripped of their hair, their clothes, their shoes, starved, beaten and painted as part of the conversion process, infants were also stripped from their parents and often killed and scalped before them.⁷⁰ Mons De LA Varenne, writing to his friend at Rochelle from Louisbourg in 1756 stated that,

They kill the children so they do not grow up to hate the killers, then they kill women so that they do not produce children to whom they will instil further hatred.⁷¹

Another observer added that “They destroy man, woman and child to prevent all future resentments.”⁷² This seems a practical consideration. However, the scalping of those people, particularly children, adds another dimension to understanding the place of children in Indian societies. The custom was certainly practiced during inter-Indian wars and naturally extended to new enemies, despite their differing military ideologies. In 1794, a group of Tennessee Indians attacked a white family in Knoxville, killing a child, “The youngest child, two years old, the cranium, entirely denuded of the scalp, was thrown into the chimney corner.”⁷³ In this case, the Indians’ treatment of the child’s body was a declaration of contempt – the corpse was of little importance but the scalp was taken.

⁶⁹ Diron D’Artaguiette, *Journal of Diron D’Artaguiette*, Inspector general of Louisiana, 1720, in *Travels in the American Colonies*, Newton D. Mereness (ed), (New York 1916).

⁷⁰ Elizabeth Gilbert, during the, Seven Years’ War, was beaten by her Indian captors for crying when her child was taken from her; In 1785, the Delawares speared a small child to death and scalped it. Loudon, *Loudon’s Indian Narratives*, p112.

⁷¹ Varenne in Maillard, *An Account of the Customs and Manners of the Micmakis*, 8th May, 1756.

⁷² Robert Beverly, *The History and Present State of Virginia* (London 1705), p25.

⁷³ James Gettys McGready Ramsay, *Annals of Tennessee to the End of the Eighteenth Century*, (Charleston 1853), p593.

Reports of the Indian attacks were articulated through the eyes of fearful settlers. Unlike localised incidents of violence, or mourning wars, which sought captives to replace deceased relatives (thus limiting the scope for killing and scalping), the most horrific accounts were generated through wars that sought eradication of certain peoples. For the Mi'kmaq, the complete rejection of the British from their shores fuelled a powerful, genocidal drive for scalps rather than the adoption of children. Likewise, the Yamasee wars of the early eighteenth century in Carolina sought to drive traders and settlers from the colonies in response to abuses and the enslavement of Indians, an event that came "close to wiping out European colonists".⁷⁴ In these cases, scalps (and torture practices) assumed a particular significance. The scalps acted as war trophies, of course, and a practical marker of kills, thereby enhancing warrior status and asserting tribal superiorities. The scalps were presented to women who danced with them at the end-of-war ceremonies.⁷⁵ For nations such as the Creeks and Choctaws, scalps were often more valuable than captives themselves, with Indians even taking scalps of their own deceased to claim as enemy scalps in order to achieve glory.⁷⁶

For colonists who allied with Indians, war trophies could present some confusion. Andrew Lipman in his study of the Pequot wars of the seventeenth century describes the confusion between Indians and their colonial allies as the Pequot presented, scalps, heads, hands and other body parts to them.⁷⁷ Colonists, accustomed to the importance of heads as war trophies (in addition to proof of death) requested heads from the Indian allies yet often received hands in return. Lipman's discussion emphasised that the delivery of enemy body parts to allies legitimised English authority whilst asserting political claims. Misinterpreting the symbolism and obligations that particular body parts held, the cross-cultural conversation was fraught with misunderstandings. However, no such confusion as to the meaning of enemy body parts existed at home. Captives were often paraded through various Indians towns before reaching their destination, the shared experience serving to reaffirm unity and fidelity. Father Le Jeune, working among the northern Montagnais and Huron Indians in the seventeenth century, stated in his Jesuit Relations,

⁷⁴ William L. Ramsey, *The Yamasee War: A Study of Culture, Economy, and Conflict in the Colonial South* (University of Nebraska Press 2008), p2.

⁷⁵ H. P. Biggar, (ed.) Samuel de Champlain, *The Works of Samuel de Champlain, Vol. 2*. (Champlain Society, Toronto, 1936), p106; B. Romans, *A Concise Natural History of East and West Florida* (New York 1776), p75; Anthony Casteel's Journal, Public Archives of Nova Scotia; Frank Speck, *Ethnology of the Yuchi Indians*, (Nebraska 2004), p85. First published Philadelphia 1909, p85.

⁷⁶ Adair, *History*, p151, 258.

⁷⁷ Andrew Lipman, ' "A Meanes to Knitt Them Togeather": *The Exchange of Body Parts in the Pequot War* ' *The William and Mary Quarterly*, Third Series, Vol. 65, No. 1 (Jan., 2008), pp. 3-28.

The journey to the village of the captors might take some time, and it was customary to stop at each village passed and to force the captives to run between two lines of women and children, who beat them with clubs, to a platform where they were exhibited for the amusement and abuse of the inhabitants.⁷⁸

Likewise, scalps were also taken from town to town, serving a similar purpose. The importance of delivering scalps to women and children signalled a “testimony to love and service”. According to James Adair, sometimes scalps were placed on the houses of relatives who had been killed, or Indians would take scalps that their enemies had in their possession. The Creeks and Choctaws would also scalp their own deceased people who had fallen in battle to prevent the enemy from scalping them, thus preventing the inherent power of the scalp falling into enemy hands.⁷⁹ Adair added that even during torture, the women would attach clay to the scalp of the victim in order to protect it from flames until the moment of removal.⁸⁰ Therefore, the removal and retention of a child’s scalp would indicate that it held as much relevance and value as an adult’s.

Value and ‘otherness’

The value of children extended beyond scalping into torture, and the age of the captive seemed of little concern. One escapee described a number of people of different ages and genders who suffered at the hands of the Shawnee in 1757, and Cherokee Chief Nancy Ward burned alive one boy in 1776.⁸¹ Other reports (second hand) even describe the boiling alive of captive children.⁸² Maillard also discussed the poor treatment of prisoners of all ages. In 1749 on Île Royale, he was dismayed to find that the,

Indians of my mission allowed their young men to kill five English children who had been their prisoners for some time and who I had hoped to convert to Catholicism.

⁷⁸ Lewis Henry Morgan, in *The League of the Ho-De-No-Sau-Nee or Iroquois*, claimed that ‘running the gauntlet’ was part of the adoption ceremony where the ‘candidate’ was tested. Those who made it past their tormentors were saved and those who fell were killed, p332-333. Reprinted (Massachusetts 1995).

⁷⁹ Adair, *History*, p166, 271.

⁸⁰ Adair, *History*, p390.

⁸¹ Henry Timberlake, *The Memoirs of Lt. Henry Timberlake, the Story of a Soldier, Adventurer and Emissary to the Cherokees 1756-1765*, (1765) p122; the Cherokee and the Chickamauga Indians, in Zella Armstrong (ed) *The History of Hamilton County and Chattanooga, Tennessee*, Volume 1, (USA 1931) p51; Adair, *History*, p164.

⁸² Adair, *History*, p287. This account was hearsay and therefore may be evidence of boasting. However, from a Creek perspective boiling may be no worse than other forms of torture.

That is what brandy (which) Frenchmen wintering nearby traded for pelts made them do.

Maillard had generously absolved the Indians from responsibility, ascribing the action to alcohol and trader influence. Nonetheless, he took pains to try to prevent further torture of captives (by women) explaining the benefits of keeping captives alive.⁸³

Not all children suffered abuse at the hands of captors, however. For those who had been taken as children and raised as Indian, they enjoyed the same freedoms and privileges as Indian children. For example, in 1780 a young Albert Gilbert was captured and adopted by Cayugas, and reportedly enjoyed his time fishing and acquiring provisions.⁸⁴ Adoption, of course, bypassed considerations of patriarchal bloodlines and in a Southeastern matrilineal society that placed emphasis on the female line, adoption was a simple process with no concern for paternity, theoretically allowing for easy assimilation. However, many settlers harboured fears that adopted children would not return to them, representing a failure of both 'civilised' culture and parenting.⁸⁵ An exception appears to have been the Mi'kmaq who adopted few captive children in the eighteenth century. Intermarriage was preferable to adoption, presenting a solution to these potential problems. In these cases, the Mi'kmaq rejection of adoption (assimilation) may have helped reassure colonists that there was no room for ambiguity over 'superior' cultures.

Children, captive or otherwise, acted as witnesses to the violence inflicted on both children and adults. Aggression in its proper context became normalised, particularly as much violence was performed ceremoniously and within community bounds.⁸⁶ This claimed violent acts from male spaces and endowed children with an ability to accommodate the physical pain of others within their developing psyches. The emotional detachment to all aspects of the enemy (man, woman and child) was crucial to ensuring continued superiority of the nations.

⁸³ He was not always successful in this regard. In 1751 the fledgling town of Dartmouth was attacked by Indians. Almost all settlers were killed. One survivor, an eight-year-old boy, had been scalped and a baby was also scalped. Maillard, *Customs of the Micmakis* and also in Whitehead, *The Old Man Told Us*, p117-119; John Wilson, *A Genuine Narrative of the Transactions in Nova Scotia Since the Settlement, June 1749, till August the 5th* (London 1751), p19.

⁸⁴ Loudon, *Loudon's Indian Narratives*, p118. See also John Rutherford.

⁸⁵ Duane, *Suffering Childhood*, p15.

⁸⁶ In one exception, Adair claimed that among the Cherokee, some 'old beloved towns' or white towns did not conduct violence within their town boundaries but took captives outside the town perform violence. Adair, *History*, p159.

Participants

That children participated in torture and violence is widely accepted among scholars of native peoples but discussion regarding the purpose behind it is less examined.⁸⁷ However, the consistent reports of children's exposure to violence strongly suggests that participation in violence was crucial to their development as adults. Mothers were primary agents in the creation of this, and children would frequently accompany women by beating captives. James Adair astutely pointed out that education was vital in allowing Indians to become accustomed to pain. He said,

...I mention this to shew the force of education and habit – those who are used to scenes of war and blood, become obdurate and are lost to all the tender feelings of nature...⁸⁸

On the treatment of captives he adds later that the violence was “on account of their false standard of education”.⁸⁹ Captives were routinely assaulted by children and encouraged to violate the adults.⁹⁰ Group assaults on captives served to foster inter-tribal connections through children and women, linking one town to the next via a communal enemy. This inversion of the traditional European adult-child power dynamic firmly placed physical power in *Indian* hands, assuming dominance over non-native people. Essentially, the Indian (of whatever nation) was superior to the enemy, male, female or child, and that power was attainable for all Indians of that nation.⁹¹ This was a powerful lesson for children and would form native identities that placed value on their indigeneity over sex or age. The process and indoctrination of violent custom was quite deliberate and consistent over several eastern seaboard Indian nations.

Those who were too small to wield a club effectively or abuse captives were still encouraged to participate. Community cannibalism of captives served to create not only an emotional and social bond, but a material, physical bond. The consumption of blood or

⁸⁷ Daniel K. Richter, *Ordeal of the Longhouse*, p36; José Antônio Brandão, *Your Fyre Shall Burn No More, Iroquois Policy toward New France and Its Native Allies to 1701*, (Nebraska 2000).

⁸⁸ Adair, *History*, p338. He refers to women being emotional in this instance, but also educated to violence. This would suggest that the violence is actively created as something that is as intrinsically natural or appropriate to women.

⁸⁹ Adair, *History*, p390.

⁹⁰ Loudon, *Loudon's Indian Narratives*, p27, 50, 88.

⁹¹ Some of this cultivation of cultural superiority can be seen in the terms used to describe Euro-Americans. Adair, for example, claimed that Cherokee women and children referred to settlers as “ugly white people”. Adair, *History*, p230.

body parts of the captives by both adults and children suggested a parity among Indians; the spiritual gains from absorbing the body of the captive were accessible to all. Other children were given limbs of captives, and although sometimes an indication of contempt for the enemy, it was nonetheless an inclusive act. For example, one mother roasted the finger of a captive and presented it to her child to consume. On another occasion Father le Jeune, also working among the Huron in New France in the seventeenth century, had his finger cut off at request of a woman who had paid for it. Another man summoned a five-year-old child and told the child to cut the finger off, who then cauterised the wound.⁹² Other children may have consumed blood of captives, or were simply smeared with it. The Abbé Maillard claimed that,

It was rarely the case that they did not devour some limbs, at least, of the prisoners they made upon one another, after torturing them to death in the most cruel and shocking manner: but they never failed in drinking their blood like water.⁹³

According to Maillard, it was customary for the Mi'kmaq to kill and disembowel captives of all ages and sexes, allowing them to be used as target practice for men. Other children contributed by gathering the very items to be used as instruments of violence, such as brush to make fires, sticks and wood to make frames upon which to place the captives. The Natchez of the Southeast, the Quapaw and others in the Louisiana region permitted a role for young people regarding captives described in great detail by travellers in the French southeast such as Le Petit, Charlevoix and particularly by La Page Du Pratz.⁹⁴ His descriptions are lengthy but offer considerable insight into the celebratory nature of captive torture and the extent to which everyone enjoyed a role, no matter how small. On a less obvious level, the evidence points to a gradual introduction for children to the very serious matter of violence and its integral role in Indian life. The assistance offered by adults to children in dismemberment showed the kind of patient schooling one may have used to instruct an apprentice in skills for his or her job, combined with the detachment of a butcher with a carcass.

⁹² Father Le Jeune in R. G. Thwaites, *Jesuit Relations and Allied Documents*, Volume 9 (Cleveland 1896), p257; See also Karen Anderson, *Chain Her by One Foot*, p172-174, p177.

⁹³ Maillard, *Customs of the Micmakis*. The Susquehanna also released captives to be hunted by young males. Lindestrom in N. Knowles, 'The Torture of Captives by the Indians of Eastern North America', *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society*, Vol. 82, No. 2 (March 1940), p242.

⁹⁴ M. Le Page Du Pratz, *The History of Louisiana, or of the Western Parts of Virginia and Carolina* (London 1774), p429.

In all of the examples, children were actively introduced to quite profound and extreme acts of violence, where direct contact with the captive was made on an individual basis. At that moment, the power of child over adult, Indian over captive, or woman over man, became personal even as it was publicly performed. One Mi'kmaq mother, accompanied by her daughter, engaged in a hostile dialogue with warriors who held a captive named Anthony Casteel whom she wished to possess. The ensuing stand-off between warrior and woman regarding ownership of the captive (and his scalp) displayed very specific gender roles, and imparted valuable lessons for young women and men. In this instance Casteel had wept in fear, anticipating a painful death at the hands of the woman. Therefore the lesson demonstrated that women were a source of fear and authority.⁹⁵ Children remained witnesses only as far as they were unable to perform anything meaningful, and when possible, women and men actively guided children either by example or by assistance.

Indulgence

The children who survived the possibility of abortion, infanticide, scalping and other war traumas enjoyed extraordinary childhoods by European, French and American standards. Many observers reported an unusual amount of indulgence and kindness towards children, and an apparent lack of discipline or hard work. It is likely that children worked as hard as family members deemed necessary, but the general absence of corporal punishment appeared as a lack of discipline or parental authority to observers. Indulgence was also displayed towards adopted enemy children also.⁹⁶ Bernard Romans, travelling in the Southeast, added that children were never chastised. John Howard Payne, who lived among the Cherokees, stated that, "parents, generally, are excessively fond of their children," and William Bartram also described Indians as being extremely "fond" of their

⁹⁵ Anthony Casteel, "Anthony Casteel's Journal", Public Archives of Nova Scotia RG1/23. Casteel was captured in 1753 by Mi'kmaq warriors who wished to keep him alive. Confronted by a Mi'kmaq woman who required the scalp for ceremonial and spiritual purposes a dispute ensued. The woman grabbed the captive intending to take his scalp, until the warriors offered an alternative scalp. This she agreed to and Casteel survived. See also Dowd, *A Spirited Resistance*, p12.

⁹⁶ Adoptions took place when children and adults were captured. Children who were adopted often adapted permanently to Indian lifeways, such as the famous case of Mary Jemison, a Seneca captive at age 12 who chose to retain her Indian identity. Indians across the eastern seaboard made little distinction between race, colour or religion as children were seen as malleable. However, the Mi'kmaq displayed an extreme level of hostility to white children, particularly the British. Their rejection of adoption to swell tribal numbers corresponds with the abortion customs that favoured fewer numbers to make better use of resources. They also displayed a distinct prejudice in favour of people who already demonstrated similar values to the Mi'kmaq, such as Catholics or Acadians. See A. Gesner, *New Brunswick, With Notes for Emigrants* (London 1847), p113, and S. W. Prenties, Ensign of the 84th Regiment of Foot, *Narrative of a Shipwreck on the Island of Cape Breton in a Voyage from Quebec 1780*, (London 1782).

children.⁹⁷ John Lawson among the Machapunga in North Carolina said that “to their Children they are extraordinary tender and indulgent; neither did I ever see a Parent correct a Child, excepting one Woman, that was the King's Wife, and she (indeed) did possess a Temper that is not commonly found amongst them.” He added, “mildness being a Vertue the Indians are in love withal, for they do not practise beating and correcting their Children, as we do.”⁹⁸

The contrast with Euro-American child-rearing customs is striking. Both sets of parent pursued similar objectives: disciplined, respectful and affectionate children. Indian and white parents also sought to develop conscience in their children, but their methods differed. Many children, particularly those of Evangelical or Methodist parents, found themselves subject to “will-breaking”, a process begun early in the child’s life and described by historian Phillip Greven as parents waging “war with children”.⁹⁹ Intended to impart the gift of obedience, parents also hoped to convey the lesson that parental authority was “absolute and incontrovertible”. Obedience and submission were the only possible responses to parents’ wishes, and such obedience should continue even into adulthood and marriage. Early use of corporal punishment, sometimes as young as 10 months old, was intended to avoid excessive correction as the child grew up.

The ‘war’ on children sometimes caused discomfort for parents, many of whom loved their children deeply. Ultimately, though, parents were persuaded that harsh discipline fostered humility, which became a foundation for other virtues. As one contemporary stated, “break their wills that you may save their souls.”¹⁰⁰ Thus, such views shaped colonial interpretations of Indian child-rearing customs. Since the controlled composure of the child was a direct reflection on the character of the parents, the Indian methods therefore appeared as a mirror of all that was unruly and undesirable about Indian lifeways.¹⁰¹

White parents sought to develop fear tempered with respect in order to ensure compliance as children and adults. Indians sought compliance through accommodation and generosity. The purpose behind this was an insurance policy of sorts. A general love that parents felt for their children notwithstanding, several observers who visited Indian nations across the

⁹⁷ Romans, *A Concise History of East and West Florida*, p51; Bartram, *On the Southeastern Indians*, p310.

⁹⁸ Lawson, *A New Voyage*, p201, 238.

⁹⁹ Philip Greven, ‘Breaking Wills in Colonial America’, in Anya Jabour (ed), *Major Problems in the History of American Families and Children* (Belmont, CA, 2005), p86-96.

¹⁰⁰ Greven, *Breaking Wills*, p87-88.

¹⁰¹ Duane, *Suffering Childhood*, p14, 34, 37, 38, and Greven, *Breaking Wills*, p90-91. In line with Duane’s observations, the apparent ‘unruliness’ of Indian people began to assume ‘childlike’ qualities in settler minds, justifying increased attempts at control and subordination.

eastern seaboard shared the belief that their benevolent treatment of children ensured a safe future for the parents. The missionary David Zeisberger, working among the Iroquois and Delaware, most clearly summarised the disciplinary relationship between parent and child. He said of children,

They follow their own inclination, do what they like and no one prevents them, except it be that they do harm to others; but even in that case they are not punished, being only reprov'd with gentle words.

Of adults he said,

Parents had rather make good the damage than punish the children, for the reason that they think the children might remember it against them and avenge themselves when they have attained to maturity.¹⁰²

Loskiel stated that parents never beat their children for fear that they would remember the brutality “and revenge themselves on some future occasion”.¹⁰³ Such beliefs directly correlate to the killing of children in warfare, namely that warriors “destroy man, woman, and child, to prevent all future resentments”. The Abbé Maillard agreed, stating that the Mi’kmaq also killed enemy children for similar reasons, in addition to killing women to further prevent instilling of hatred in future generations.¹⁰⁴ That children were viewed in a future sense (and as combatants) also connects to their early introduction to violence, framing them as active agents rather than passive or obedient recipients of parental will. Furthermore, it demonstrates that mothers and uncles / fathers viewed their role as parents as coming to an end. This differs considerably from Euro-American parents who expected the full compliance of their children even into adulthood. Essentially, Indian parents viewed themselves as actively creating a child that would – at some point – embody the tribal values imparted to them, acting as autonomous adults when parental authority would cease to have any meaning. Instead, respect for authority was offered to matrons, sachems and other community elders. If one sought to create an Indian whose loyalty primarily lay with the community rather than immediate family interests, then this approach to child-rearing certainly made sense. Zeisberger’s views support this interpretation. Far from

¹⁰² Archer Butler Hulbert, William Nathaniel Schwarze (eds), *David Zeisberger's History of the North American Indians* (Columbus: Oion Archaeological and Historical Society, 1910), p16-17, 75-76.

¹⁰³ Loskiel, *History of the Mission*, p62.

¹⁰⁴ Knowles, *The Torture of Captives*, p61; Beverly, *The History and Present State of Virginia*, p150; Maillard, *Customs of the Micmakis*, p99.

raising a horde of delinquent children, the indulgent approach produced respectful children. He said,

They treated the aged well, brought them it may be, a deer, in the hope that they might be instructed of them how to attain to equal age. They presented the old, also, with wampum or belts, with the same hope. While nothing was said, the aged understood and gave the desired instruction on another occasion.¹⁰⁵

John Lawson concurred adding that, “The Children of both Sexes are very docile, and learn any thing with a great deal of Ease and Method”.¹⁰⁶ If the intention was for parents to instill respect for elders through indulgence then it had apparently worked.

The role of the child as an indulged individual also acted as a brake to parental excesses or inclinations towards non-approved abuse – violence, after all, was strictly for captives and enemies, never for one’s own people. This lesson was repeatedly demonstrated to children; in the violence performed on enemies, the authority wielded by mothers, the power to determine life and death over captives, and the absence of abuse of children. This remarkable inversion of adult-child dynamics, unseen in European societies outside of class politics, endowed children with a level of power that could only be realised – and enhanced – as they became adults. For a child, violence was not learned as a recipient of parental discipline, but through witnessing acts performed upon outsiders.

Huskanaw

So at what point did this transformation from indulged child to active, violent person take place? The Huskanaw ceremonies – or rites of passage – fulfilled this purpose, inducing adulthood in a series of tests or extreme experiences. Samuel Moore, the boy burned to death by Cherokee chief Nancy Ward, was described by Timberlake as a “youth”.¹⁰⁷ Although young, the perceived maturity of Moore was crucial to the Cherokee. The burning and torture of the boy was less concerned with making a statement of hard-heartedness or setting an cruel example to other enemies. Rather, it is probable that he was just beyond childhood and had entered adulthood, thereby permitting his unpleasant death. Had he been younger, torture would have had less potency for the Cherokees who sought a warrior’s death from their captives to add meaning to their victory. After all, the death of a

¹⁰⁵ *Zeisberger’s History of the North American Indians*, p119.

¹⁰⁶ Lawson, *A New Voyage*, p84-85.

¹⁰⁷ Henry Timberlake, *The Memoirs of Lt. Henry Timberlake*, p122.

warrior at the hands of women in torture held as much resonance and importance as male-versus-male deaths in combat.¹⁰⁸ As a youth, his age allowed him access to different spiritual processes (through the Huskanaw for Indians) that were denied younger children, and his true powers lay in those spiritual processes. Therefore, the removal or containment of those powers became vital for Cherokee war success. Moore's untimely death was the ultimate statement of his adulthood, and for native children the Huskanaw signaled acceptance as a fully-fledged, contributing tribal member.

Until the age of Huskanaw and other similar practices, children's social locations within the nations were sometimes ambiguous, and they were viewed as a distinct group. Although girls were primarily schooled by women and boys by men, genuine tribal status was awarded to male and female adults with children as 'othered' and awaiting legitimacy. This distinction was evident as early as the start of the eighteenth century, heard through Indian talks and speeches, and evidenced in both the South and Northeast. Where the British resolutely adhered to European conventions that separated women from men and wives from other women (whilst simultaneously categorising children alongside women) Indian responses clearly defined social legitimacy along age rather than gender lines.¹⁰⁹ The very fact that boys and girls joined together in the Huskanaw reinforced their group identity as children.¹¹⁰

The only true distinction that could be made between the treatment of boys and girls lay in the expectations of family and nation. Girls in the Southeast born to matrilineal clans were already keenly aware of the expectations held of them, and of their impending status as clan mothers and matrons of the future. As kingmakers, girls knew their place within society but their contributions were yet to come. Boys, trained in hunting, craft and violence, began their journey to earning recognition and status after the Huskanaw. Together, girls and boys occupied a space in social limbo and the Huskanaw offered passage out of this ambiguous status. Often taking place at the onset of puberty, boys and girls found themselves preparing for the Huskanaw either by eagerly awaiting the trials, or by running away.¹¹¹ The nature of many of the trials do suggest a considerable test of character and fortitude. Most were characterised by physical deprivations such as sleep,

¹⁰⁸ G. E. Dowd, *A Spirited Resistance* (Baltimore, London 1992), p15.

¹⁰⁹ John Stuart to Creeks and Choctaws, 1766, Oct 29th, 1765, March 27, PRO, C/O 5/66. John Clarence Webster, *The Career of Abbé Le Loutre* (Shediac N.B., Canada, 1933).

¹¹⁰ Timberlake, *Memoirs*, p123; Lawson *A New Voyage*, p233. In other regions, the sexes underwent separate Huskanaw or rites of passage. See Axtell, *The Indian Peoples of Eastern America, A Documentary History of the Sexes* (New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981).

¹¹¹ Lawson, *A New Voyage*, p233.

food and shelter, the ingestion of intoxicants, purgatives and hallucinogens, and sought a complete transformation from child to adult. This signified most clearly that for some Indian nations there was a clear and dividing line between child and adult, rather than a gradual progression to maturity.

In the Carolinas, the Huskanaw was held in winter. During these cold months the children entered the 'House of Correction' where they were kept in the dark, half starved and fed intoxicating plants that turned them "raving mad". John Lawson, who gave a detailed description of the event, added, "You may hear them make the most dismal and hellish Cries, and Howlings, that ever humane Creatures express'd; all which continues about five or six Weeks, and the little Meat they eat, is the nastiest, loathsome stuff, and mixt with all manner of Filth it's possible to get."¹¹² Lawson added that afterwards the children "do not speak for several Days; I think, twenty or thirty; and look so gastly, and are so chang'd, that it's next to an Impossibility to know them again." Likewise, in Virginia the young Pamunkey males would also be starved, confined in the woods for several months. Writing at the start of the eighteenth century, Robert Beverley, the educated son of a Virginia politician and planter, witnessed aspects of the Huskanaw and claimed the young men were fed,

...some poisonous, intoxicating roots; by virtue of which physic, and by the severity of the discipline which they became stark, staring mad; in which condition, they are kept eighteen or twenty days. During these extremities, they are shut up, night and day, in a strong inclosure, made on purpose...In this cage, thirteen young men had been huskanawed.¹¹³

In this case the young men were chosen between the ages of 10 and 15. In addition to creating adults capable of handling the travails of Indian life, Lawson was informed that the Huskanaw "carries off those infirm weak Bodies, that would have been only a Burden and Disgrace to their Nation, and saves the Victuals and Cloathing for better People, that would have been expended on such useless Creatures."¹¹⁴

In the previous century the purgative aspects of the Huskanaw were practiced further north in New England where the Wampanoags and Narragansetts chose boys who abstained

¹¹² Lawson, *A New Voyage*, p233.

¹¹³ Beverley, *The History of Virginia*, p163.

¹¹⁴ Lawson, *A New Voyage*, p234.

from food but consumed Centuary (a type of marsh flower). Forced to vomit the mixture of herbs up, they would consume the matter and once again disgorge it, repeating the process several times until blood appeared. In addition to this the young males would beat their shins with sticks to toughen them up.¹¹⁵ More fortunate young men in New England were simply sent forth into the woods with a bow, arrows, hatchet and knife, and supported themselves for the winter season. At the end of winter the young men were taught to find poisonous and bitter herbs at which point they were expected to consume and learn to *resist* vomiting.¹¹⁶ However, for most indigenous nations purgation was crucial to spiritual and ritual purification, and was used frequently by adults to cleanse themselves before and after war matters, or for other ritual purposes. Known commonly as the black drink, or black tea, the bitter liquid caused vomiting and was considered a means of sanctifying the body. The Carolina Indians drank it regularly. The bush known as Caffena grew in abundance near swamps and was traded with indigenous groups further west.¹¹⁷

The transformative moment from childhood to adulthood was deliberately induced. Fasting, vomiting and physical hardship was one matter, but the true purpose of the Huskanaw was not just to find resilient bodies. The goal was mental conversion. By this token, visions, hallucinations, conversations with spirits or the experience of a prophetic dream that could be interpreted, all pointed towards a successful Huskanaw. John Heckewelder, a Moravian missionary working among the Delaware in the 1760s, claimed that children would visualise themselves performing supernatural feats, or would meet with the Manitou (Algonquian gods or great spirit) who would offer predictions to the child.¹¹⁸ Symbolically, the child was ‘dead’ and became a new person. Both Beverley and Lawson described the children as casting off their previous memories and behaviours of childhood in order to “release the youth from all their childish impressions... They hope by this proceeding, to root out all the prepossessions and unreasonable prejudices which

¹¹⁵ Alexander Young (ed), *Chronicles of the Pilgrim Father of the Colony of Plymouth from 1602 to 1625* (Boston 1844), p360. 2nd Edition.

¹¹⁶ J. Franklin Jameson (ed), *Narratives of New Netherland, 1606-1664* (New York 1937), p114.

¹¹⁷ Adair, *History*, p98, 102, 108; Pickett, *History of Alabama*, p98, 104, 106; Timberlake, *Memoirs*, p40; Indians of the Southeast were familiar with all forms of herbs, particularly the poisonous ones. Carefully chosen herbs and leaves would have been used for the initiation into purgatives. Lawson, *A New Voyage*, p90-91, 195, 221. The tea is also known as American Holly and contains caffeine, and was used for purification before meetings by inducing vomiting. Charles Hudson, *The Black Drink; A Native American Tea* (Athens, University of Georgia Press, 2004).

¹¹⁸ Many Indians among the Mi'kmaq, central colonies and the Southeast, made decisions based on dreams and visions, and considered them very important. Recollect missionary Chrestien Le Clercq, working among then Gaspesian Indians said, “Our Gaspesians are still so credulous about dreams that they yield easily to everything which their imagination or the Devil puts into their heads when sleeping.” William F. Ganong (ed), Father Chrestien Le Clercq, *New Relation of Gaspesia with the Customs and Religion of the Gaspesian Indians*, (Toronto 1910), p227. See also Rev, John Heckewelder, *History, Manners and Customs of the Indian Nations Who Once Inhabited Pennsylvania and the Neighbouring States* (Maryland 1819), p245.

are fixed in the minds of children... Thus, also, they become discharged from the remembrance of any ties by blood.”¹¹⁹ Although intended primarily for creating responsible councilmen, the definite break between childhood affections for family – or other attachments – was clear. The time after the Huskanaw therefore permitted a greater role in tribal affairs and a legitimate voice in community matters, and both sexes became accustomed to recognising the value of their spoken word. After this, boys began the search for hunting and warfare recognition, and for girls the onset of physical adulthood commenced. Transformation at such key moments in a child’s life were also marked by the adoption of a new name.¹²⁰

Rites of passage pertaining to girls frequently focused on menstruation. As bearers of the next generation, the importance of this moment held a great deal of significance among Indian nations. Theoretically, girls could achieve adulthood faster than males, especially beyond the Huskanaw, through sexual activity and procreation. Until then, her first time in the menstrual hut signified her entry into womanhood. The menstrual hut sat apart from the town and was occupied by women during the menses. Most observers claimed the separation from the town was to protect males from the ‘polluting’ effects of menstruation, which could induce all manner of illnesses in men, war failures, or even paralysis.¹²¹ For patrilineal societies such as the Mi’kmaq, who depended on able-bodied men for meat procurement from small and larger game, this became a serious matter – even as the Mi’kmaq were unsure of the origins or purpose of the custom. Recollect missionary Chrestien Le Clercq said,

The women and girls, when they suffer the inconveniences usual to their sex, are accounted unclean. At the time they are not permitted to eat with the others, but they must have their separate kettle, and live by themselves. The girls are not allowed, during that time, to eat any beaver, and those who eat of it are reputed bad; for the Indian are convinced, they say, that the beaver, which has sense, would no longer allow itself to be taken by the Indians if it had been eaten by their unclean daughters.¹²²

¹¹⁹ Beverley, *The History of Virginia*, P161-164.

¹²⁰ Names identified achievements or habits of the person. For example, a youth who had not taken some scalps would continue to suffer the indignity of his mother’s name or first given name. Adair, *History*, p193; Lawson, *A New Voyage*, p195; Milfort, *Memoirs*, p175; Heckewelder, *History, Manners and Customs*, p246.

¹²¹ Sieur De Diereville, *Relation of the Voyage to Port Royal in Acadia or New France* (Rouen 1708); Paul le Jeune, Relation of 1636, in Reuben Gold Thwaites (ed), *The Jesuit Relations and Allied Documents* (Cleveland 1896), p123.

¹²² Le Clercq, *New Relation*, p227.

The repeated use of the word “unclean” appears in other descriptions of young women or girls achieving menstruation. It is more likely to denote the inherent power of female bodily fluid, particularly blood (hence the cleansing performed by men after warfare).¹²³ Likewise, the spilling of semen could have similar dangerous effects, such as the fear of copulating couples on Cherokee fields.¹²⁴ Even in hunting towns, women were intimately linked with landscape through foraging practises, and where the Mi'kmaq appeared to fear the effects on men, in fact menstruation was closely tied to food. Consequently, almost all restrictive customs centred on avoiding food, preparing food separately from everyone (not just men), or eating food separately.¹²⁵ Given that menstruation was evidence of the *absence* of fertility (and thus, production), the custom had a kind of logic where the power to end fertility could be passed to other areas of the town or community, whether through fields or food receptacles.

Loskiel described a girl's first menstrual period as being “out of order for the first time”. Like others, she fasted and vomited in solitary confinement for two months. Rather than focus on her mental changes, though, he framed her achievements in relation to sexual unions describing her as becoming “marriageable” after the event.¹²⁶ For most girls, their first time involved removal from the town (like the young men), where they were encouraged to fast until visions presented themselves. Writing of the Miami in 1702, French trader Pierre Liette also described the newly-menstruating young women as being dispatched to the wilderness where they sought “the gift of great power for the future.” On her return to the town she would recall these visions, which were treated with the utmost gravity. Liette added that the visions of these young women were considered important and powerful enough on which to base war decisions.¹²⁷ Thus, young women enjoyed their first taste of adulthood, the power of their opinion and the public endorsement of new-found adulthood.

Violence is most often articulated in the historical record as a masculine endeavour. Primarily attached to men, its depiction favoured a narrative that endowed men with sole

¹²³ Theda Perdue provides a good overview of menstruation customs in *Cherokee Women*, p29-40.

¹²⁴ Adair, *History*, p89, 232.

¹²⁵ Horatio Bardwell Cushman, *History of the Choctaw, Chickasaw and Natchez Indians*, (Texas 1899), p369, 497.

¹²⁶ Loskiel, *History of the Mission*, p56.

¹²⁷ Milo Milton Quaife (ed), *The Western Country in the 17th century; the Memoirs of Lamothe Cadillac and Pierre Liette* (Chicago 1947), p133-134.

responsibility for legitimate and appropriate displays of violence. This chapter has shown that violence had a much wider and more sophisticated application amongst indigenous peoples. It was part of the repertoire of skills that were endowed to children to help achieve status and validation as they entered adulthood.

The ultimate infliction of violent acts upon adolescents was not intended as a punishment or simply as a rite of passage. It was a key marker of their human value. The inverted adult-child power dynamic illustrated in this chapter not only allowed children to participate and contribute to the suffering of the enemy, it also legitimised children as enemy targets, denying any form of age or gender as a means of absolution from purposeful violence. Furthermore, children held the potential as future enemies and where revenge may have been a long time arriving, its eventual arrival *was* assured. Failure to kill an enemy child meant that descendants would almost certainly have to deal with the consequences of one's mercy.

Thus, children were legitimate targets, their scalps held prize value and – when old enough – their bodies held the key to spiritual powers through ritualised violence performed upon them by enemies. Girls and boys became accustomed to violence that was gender neutral and emotionally ambivalent, endowed with personal accountability. Thus, the training of children in violence was acceptable, customary and absolutely necessary. It was taught outwith anger *and* within it through attacks on enemies. It was both impulsive and considered, it was spiritual and meaningful, it was prolonged and it was immediate. It was vengeful and it could even be respectful. This layered approach to violence shows that context determined the types of violence permitted, who it was performed upon, when it was performed and who had the right to inflict certain actions.

Finally, the induction into indigenous violent practises presented a final dimension to Indian worlds in the eighteenth century for ultimately, the persistent and repeated exposure to low levels of physical aggression led to the final moment of conversion: the Huskanaw. In this act children stepped beyond the threshold, converting their violent potential from observer to participant and, eventually, to recipient. As recipients they were prepared for what may lie ahead in adulthood. Violence was a vehicle to introduce ideas of social responsibility and accountability, an expression of autonomy and ownership of actions. Children developed a legitimate tribal voice, their words given weight and consideration. Girls and boys were part of a complex violent matrix where they were expected to develop competency in violence, a carefully honed tool to serve them in adulthood. In this manner,

then, childhood violence signified the essence of Indian war behaviour as something more than reactive, vitriolic or mindlessly bloody despite contemporary interpretations. Instead it became a means of spiritual conversion that was gender neutral and, for girls, a tool that permitted a wide range of femininities to be realised throughout their adult lives, in sex, marriage and matronhood.

Chapter 3

Sexuality

The middle of the eighteenth century throughout the Eastern seaboard was scarred by inter-Indian warfare, Indian-settler violence and inter-colonial violence. Numerous battles on native soil had devastating effects on communities on all sides as children, women and men attempted to comprehend new and frightening rules regarding warfare, gender roles and land-ownership. The Seven Years' War created and killed alliances, and Europeans continued to acquire colonial land whose occupation carried with it a whole slew of new ideas regarding ownership and property – and who was entitled to it. The American War of Independence marked a painful wrench from the mother nation, leaving in its wake a nation of people who were now responsible for Indian-American relations. Modern scholarship provides a wealth of evidence demonstrating that within this complex world of competing interests, native women continued to enjoy significant status, authority and freedom within their nations. Impacted by the rapidly fluctuating colonial and American landscape, they demonstrated remarkable resilience and were able to embrace these changes, accommodating new social mores and expectations of white and Indian men. Sexual activity occupied a significant portion of these female identities, which – if contemporary observers were to be believed – fell far short of modest and appropriate behaviour for women.

Further complicating the narrative, while many historians acknowledged that female sexual actions often took place almost entirely independently of male control and regulation, women nonetheless remained dependent on men in other ways.¹ Therefore, the full significance of women's freedom and the range of its impact in other areas of their lives is not yet fully understood. While it is possible to separate sexuality from other aspects of women's lives, the use of a separate sexual category to analyse Indian women carries its own restrictions. It assumes a Eurocentric hue, compartmentalising her characteristics and

¹ Daniel H. Usner Jr., *Indian, Settlers and Slaves in a Frontier Exchange Economy; the Lower Mississippi Valley before 1783* (North Carolina 1992), p235; Kathryn E. Holland Braund, 'Guardians of Tradition and Handmaidens to Change: Women's Roles in Creek Economic and Social Life during the Eighteenth Century', *American Indian Quarterly*, Vol. 14, No.3 (Summer, 1990), pp. 239-258; Godbeer, *Sexual Revolution*, p154-189; Jennifer S. H. Brown, *Strangers in Blood, Fur Trade Family Companies in Indian Country* (Oklahoma 1996); Sylvia Van Kirk, *Strangers in Blood, Women in Fur-Trade Society 1670-1870* (Oklahoma 1983).

disconnecting her sexual choices from her other roles. To date, little attempt has been made to bridge the gulf between extreme liberty and severe censure, a predictable westernised binary of femininity that is of little use in constructing a narrative of Indian women's lives. By taking an overview of Indian sexuality, this chapter presents some discussion on female behaviour, Indian concepts of sexual behaviour and their associated restrictions, with explanations that are more in keeping with Indian sexual customs as opposed to interpretations of sexual activity as viewed through Westernised eyes.

The chapter will show that women's sexual behaviour offered material opportunities that advanced their social status, and that they utilised their sexual freedoms efficiently from a young age. Female sexual activity was closely linked to Indian masculinities, and the Indian male lack of sexual obsession was reflected in their reluctance to dominate women physically. Therefore, to observers female sexuality was viewed as morally defunct, and Indian masculinity declared to be lacking true manliness. Addressing their respective 'weaknesses', Indian and white men increasingly began to utilise sexual control of Indian women as part of their repertoire of power, attempting sexual subjugation of women as they concurrently undermined each other's masculinities. This chapter explores the means by which both parties negotiated these relationships via sexual activities, as Indian female sexuality – an expression of independence – met male expectations of dominance. The chapter begins with early manifestations of sexual activity, examining sex and material exchange, age, honour, childbirth and status, sexual violence, sexual regulation and the attendant punishments for transgressions. The focus of the chapter is on female actions from adolescence to adulthood.

Age, sex and exchange

White male travellers were unaccustomed to sexual women who lived in the public world and whose sexual conduct was openly permitted and validated by the community. For those who were not physically familiar with sexualised women outside marriage, they were at least familiar with the concept of prostitution. In Europe, a special category of women existed who provided sexual services to men.² Living beyond civilised life, prostitutes

² John D'Emilio and Estelle B. Freedman, *Intimate Matters, A History of Sexuality in America* (New York, 1989), p8, 92, 135. D'Emilio and Freedman provide a compelling discussion of Indian women and prostitution, which emphasises the brutality that often accompanied such interactions particularly in the 19th Century and westward expansion. Also, James Cookson, *Thoughts on Polygamy, Suggested by the Dictates of Scripture, Nature, Reason, and Common Sense; with a Description of Marriage and its Obligations; a Contemplation of our National System of Law relative Thereto; and Particularly an Examination of the Marriage Act Including Remarks on Thelyphthora*

sanitised (or separated) sexual desire and left chaste, deserving women unaffected and untouched by debased acts. As such, to come face to face with girls who apparently operated as ‘prostitutes’ with community approval, and even maternal authority, presented a conundrum for some white male travellers seeking female company in Indian territory. Even worse, sexualised females were not expected to marry as a result of their behaviour or liaisons, despite their youth. There was no requirement to ‘save’ one’s reputation.³ Quite the opposite, her actions *enhanced* her fledgling feminine reputation. William Byrd described their exploits saying,

It is by no means a loss of reputation among the Indians, for damsels that are single to have intrigues with the men; on the contrary, they account it an argument of superior merit to be liked by a great number of gallants. However, like the ladies that game, they are a little mercenary in their amours, and seldom bestow their favours out of stark love and kindness.⁴

John Lawson described the allure of ‘honourable’ promiscuous women, who were the most coveted as ‘first wives’ but virgins were not particularly desirable.⁵ In an attempt to establish clan and community credentials, young girls vied for sexual conquests. “...Young girls, they are the mistresses of their own bodies (to use their own expression). The good Jesuit fathers are endeavoring as much as possible to instil virtue in them, but they have not as yet succeeded,” said Diron D’Artaguiette as he traveled among the Illinois.⁶ The “good Fathers” were particularly concerned with the age of some of the girls. D’Artaguiette added, “One sees among them very few girls, twelve years old, who have not several lovers, all of whom they make happy.”⁷ The age would appear to be young to be engaging in sexual intercourse but his observations were supported by his contemporaries who witnessed similar younger ages for pre-marital sex up and down the Eastern seaboard.

and its Scheme; with some Hints for the Prevention of Prostitution (Winchester 1782).

(*Thelyphythora* was a treatise on ‘female ruin’ written by clergyman Martin Madan in 1780, which advocated the benefits of polygamy.) For personal accounts of prostitution from the 19th Century see Harriet Wilson’s detailed accounts (1786-1846) in Lesley Blanch (ed), *Harriet Wilson’s Memoirs; the Greatest Courtesan of Her Age*, (Phoenix Press, 1957). For European ideas on prostitution see Joanna Richardson, *The Courtesans, The Demi-Monde in 19th Century France* (Orion, 1967).

³ This sexual role appeared to have been reserved for younger women alone. There are fewer accounts of mature women engaging in such sexual encounters.

⁴ Edmund Ruffin (ed), William Byrd, of Westover, *The Westover Manuscripts: Containing the History of the Dividing Line Betwixt Virginia and North Carolina; A Journey to the Land of Eden, 1733* (Petersburg 1841), P35.

⁵ Lawson, *A New Voyage to Carolina*, (London 1709), p35.

⁶ D’Artaguiette, Journal of Diron D’Artaguiette in *Travels in the American Colonies*, Newton D. Mereness (ed) (New York 1916), p73.

⁷ D’Artaguiette, *Travels*, p48.

Bernard Romans writing on the Florida Indians claimed that “fornication” was a “natural accident” and that girls were considered no less for their sexual exploits, which he described as ‘slips’. Girls could engage in up to a dozen sexual encounters before marriage.⁸ Of the Carolina Indians Lawson also stated,

The Girls at 12 or 13 Years of Age, as soon as Nature prompts them, freely bestow their Maidenheads on some Youth about the same Age, continuing her Favours on whom she most affects, changing her Mate very often, few or none of them being constant to one, till a greater Number of Years has made her capable of managing Domestick Affairs, and she hath try'd the Vigour of most of the Nation she belongs to; Multiplicity of Gallants never being a Stain to a Female's Reputation, or the least Hindrance of her Advancement.⁹

By Loskiel's estimation, Iroquoian girls were getting married at around age 14, boys at age 18.¹⁰ Le Page Du Pratz in Louisiana claimed that grooms were rarely younger than 25-years-old before marriage. He gave no age for women.¹¹ Among the Mi'kmaq, the Abbé Maillard put the marriage age for men as old as 30, with girls always “extreamly young” but he did not provide a specific age.¹² For many Indian couples, however, it was not uncommon to live together outwith marriage. Father Gabriel Sagard, working among the Huron, despaired to see sexual activity without the marriage sacrament. He referred to the early promiscuity of young boys as ‘wickedness’ and claimed that the Huron offered too much liberty to youth causing “the young girls to prostitute themselves as soon as they are capable of doing so. Nay even the parents are often the procurers of their own daughters.”¹³ Likewise, the Mi'kmaq often practiced a period of ‘engagement’ prior to marriage.¹⁴ The apparently brazen enjoyment of sex outwith marriage by couples living together was certainly a source of some interest to observers.¹⁵ However, the practical aspects of testing the relationship before marriage was often lost on those who witnessed the unions. Most

⁸ B. Romans, *A Concise Natural History of East and West Florida* (New York 1776), p86.

⁹ Lawson, *A New Voyage*, p34.

¹⁰ G. H. Loskiel, *History of the Mission of the United Brethren Among the Indians in North America* (London 1794) p56.

¹¹ M. Le Page Du Pratz, *The History of Louisiana, or of the Western Parts of Virginia and Carolina*, (London 1774), p327.

¹² The Abbé Maillard, *An Account of the Customs and Manners of the Micmakis and Maricheets Savage Nations*, (London 1758) p53.

¹³ Father Gabriel Sagard, *The Long Journey to the Country of the Hurons* (Toronto: The Champlain Society 1939), p121.

¹⁴ Maillard, *Customs and Manners of the Micmakis*, p55. Engagements could be up to three or four years for couples.

¹⁵ A. J. Pickett, *History of Alabama, and Incidentally of Georgia and Mississippi, from the Earliest Period Volume II* (Charleston 1851), p183.

Indian nations preferred happiness to extended marriages and believed it was ultimately natural to dissolve unions before disharmony could penetrate the marriage, clan or community. One old Indian man in 1770 said to Heckewelder (in apparently broken English), “Squaw love to eat meat! No husband! No meat! Squaw do every thing to please husband! He do the same to please squaw! live happy!”¹⁶

Observers may have felt some repugnance at the perceived laxity of laws surrounding sexuality, but they nonetheless maintained a fastidious attention to detail when describing the appearance of Indian women. Part of the attraction for traders and travelers may have lain in the fact that they lived and worked in the American interior or remote areas, far from civilized life and detached from cultural inhibitions. Without fear of moral censure, they were free to explore new sexual possibilities. Their accounts describe everything from skin tone, height, weight, tattoos, plucking hair, breast size, hair colour, post-baby bodies and aged matrons. Some descriptions were unflattering, some straightforward and others were charged with sexual thrills and numerous adjectives.¹⁷ Observers such as Thomas Harriot used illustrations to depict the nudity of women for eager readers back home in England.¹⁸ Descriptions also included those of the ‘trading girls’, young women who engaged in sexual intercourse with white men on a more casual basis. They were described by the ever-reliable witness John Lawson:

They set apart the youngest and prettiest Faces for trading Girls; these are remarkable by their Hair, having a particular Tonsure by which they are known, and distinguish'd from those engag'd to Husbands. They are mercenary, and whoever makes Use of them, first hires them, the greatest Share of the Gain going to the King's Purse, who is the chief Bawd...¹⁹

William Bartram claimed women painted themselves when preparing to grant “certain favours to the other sex”.²⁰ Although presented as prostitutes, trading girls appeared to be young and unmarried, and therefore more suited to casual arrangements for trade goods

¹⁶ J. Heckewelder, *History, Manners, and Customs of the Indian Nations Who Once Inhabited Pennsylvania and the Neighboring States*, The Historical Society of Pennsylvania (1876), p162.

¹⁷ Descriptions of Indian men were often admiring of athletic abilities, hunting, running and shooting. Viewed in military terms, men were valued by their active roles. Women were appreciated for passive skills and physical appearance.

¹⁸ Richard Hakluyt (ed), Thomas Harriot, *A Briefe and True Report of the New Found Land of Virginia* (New York 1871).

¹⁹ Lawson, *A New Voyage*, p35.

²⁰ Bartram, *On The Southeastern Indians*, p122.

until they married. Their distinctive appearance was most probably to ensure Indian men did not make inappropriate advances to married women.

Men were often struck by the precociousness of young women. Many of the Southeastern girls especially were proactive in seeking partners, often without the purpose of material gain. White men were therefore unable to categorise these girls as prostitutes. In addition, the absence of fatherly directives in shaping the sexuality of girls (unmarried sex was regulated primarily by women) further undermined any understanding of the role of sex among young people, and by extension, the nature of sex with white men. Ethnologists and anthropologists point out that the proscription of pre-marital female sex in pre-industrial societies was considered a direct reflection on the extent of masculine control over women. Thus, the value placed on virginity, and the social value of the girl herself.

Ethnologist Alice Schlegel states that, “One way to assess a woman's autonomy is to ask whether she controls her own sexuality”.²¹ If this is the case, then from a very early age young girls were laying claim to their own territory – namely, their bodies. This territory housed their latent spiritual abilities, they determined access whilst maintaining barriers, and used it to gain material benefit when sufficiently old enough. Sexuality was a crucial part of women learning how to ‘own’ their bodies as they grew beyond the collective care and ownership of indigenous communities. Owning one’s body meant owning one’s actions, and as each girl grew from sex with youths her own age (or from her community), she prepared herself for taking sexual relations to the next level: sex with external men. In the histories studied for this thesis, these were primarily white men, traders and travellers.

Children and status

For trading girls sex was a practical means to a material end, and as girls became older, the issue of children was as welcomed as maturity was achieved, signaling certain fertility. As Le Page Du Pratz described it, the male lover had no objection to others’ offspring, “on the

²¹ Alice Schlegel, Status, Property, and the Value on Virginity, *American Ethnologist*, Vol. 18, No. 4 (Nov., 1991), pp. 719-734. Schlegel adds that despite the control of female virginity, virginity was not necessarily an indication of subordination of girls to parents.

contrary, rates the merit of his future spouse, in proportion to the fruits she has produced.”²² The issue of children was not just an assurance of fecundity but was tangible and material evidence of a woman’s value and contribution to the tribe.²³ Male sexual partners then shared in this contributory effort, achieving some status via the young woman. The Abbé Maillard illustrated this importance of children to men most clearly when speaking to Mi’kmaq males about sex. Referring to his abstinence from sex and his ability to integrate with the people, they informed him that, “You are an angel. How could you possibly adjust to our way of life? How could you consort with women? How could you set about reproducing yourself by them so as to leave behind you a living, breathing image of yourself?”²⁴ Status achieved via sex and childbirth was sought by both genders. The Abbé Maillard concurred claiming that a girl only truly achieved womanhood when she gave birth. If she was married and remained childless, she sought a divorce so that she could “prostitute herself without any scandal”.²⁵ Where other trading girls appeared to operate prior to marriage, The Abbé Maillard gives the only example I have been able to find of this also happening *after* marriage and divorce. His description, however, reads as though sexual activity was forced upon women when he stated that, “if she doesn’t fancy this way of life, she can be compelled to it for the sake of the warriors who do not wish to marry yet.” He claimed Mi’kmaq men were addicted to sex “and rarely miss an occasion of gratifying their appetite to it,” thus explaining the purpose of sexually active, available women.²⁶

It is significant that power of life and death over an infant could have fallen to young, unmarried women, should the decision need to be made, and it illustrated two points: the first was control over her fate using her body, the second was the early expressions of civil duties. As a transitional stage in developing womanhood, this aspect of sexual behaviour involved killing, and was perhaps an early test for young women past the age of Huskanaw. For girls raised with violent expectations, depriving life or taking it marked a major step in performing civil and sacred duties. After all, she would be expected to perform such a role on a much larger stage, within warfare and before her community. As

²² M. Le Page Du Pratz, *The History of Louisiana*, p326.

²³ Maillard, *An Account of the Customs and Manners of the Micmakis*, p52.

²⁴ Pierre Antoine Simon Maillard, extracts from “Lettre a Madame de Drucourt” in Ruth Holmes Whitehead (ed), *The Old Man Told Us* (Nova Scotia 1991), p110.

²⁵ Alice Schlegel, Status, Property, and the Value on Virginity, *American Ethnologist*, Vol. 18, No. 4 (Nov., 1991), pp. 719-734; Maillard, *An Account of the Customs and Manners of the Micmakis*, p52.

²⁶ Maillard, *Customs and Manners of the Micmakis*, p52-53. Maillard’s ‘forced prostitution’ account does not quite align with other descriptions of the Mi’kmaq that show a deep warmth, love and fondness for women, daughters, wives and matrons.

a rejection of white male issue, it was also an attack on their masculinity, which would also be displayed in ritual torture of captives. For white men, though, the significance of the status gained by girls via sex was lost on them. More concerned with access to sex, the details they provided regarding the physical description of Indian women betrayed an undeniable attraction to them. The French in Louisiana struggled constantly with soldiers who preferred Indian women to white women, importing as often as possible a steady stream of girls to offset the licentious habits of the men, even sending a detail of women from houses of correction.²⁷ However, when faced with a choice, the ready availability of trading girls seemed to trump the commitments attached to traditional European romantic relationships. Accustomed to purchasing, owning or taking female bodies, white men placed themselves as the active agent in the sexual exchanges, despite all evidence that pointed to women as often acting as architects of the encounters.

Sex and marriage had different social functions for many Indian nations. “Chastity”, or an observation of rules surrounding extra-marital sex, may well have played a large part in marriage. But chastity itself (sexual purity or restraint) was not a requirement of femininity, desirability or marriageability. Women acted as providers and dominant forces within and outwith their communities, and descriptions of a number of Southeastern women from powerful clans casts some doubt on the ability or authority of men to subjugate even married women to states of chastity, despite the best efforts of patriarchally-minded white men.²⁸ Indian societies, after all, often consisted of a number of matrilineal/local/focal practices with their masculine equivalents, resulting in any number of seemingly incompatible gendered structures, for example matrilineal descent coupled with patrilocality, or patriarchal privilege within a matrifocal society: women’s sexual freedoms and restrictions could certainly be accommodated within this matrix.²⁹

²⁷ Pickett, *History of Alabama*, p212, 213, 238, 255, 257, 273.

²⁸ Milfort’s marriage to Jeannette was probably orchestrated by female members of the Wind Clan which included Alexander McGillivray’s mother, Sehoy, and his influential sister Sophia: Louis Le Clerc Milfort, *Memoirs or a Quick Glance at my Various Travels and my Sojourn in the Creek Nation*, (1802), J. F. McDermott (ed), p224: The influential Mary Musgrove was also of the Wind Clan. For an overview of her life and that of Cherokee council member Nancy Ward see Gretchen M. Bataille, *Native American Women, A Biographical Dictionary* (New York 1993), p180 and p35, 372. Other powerful women included ‘Queen’ Senawki who greeted the first Georgia settlers in 1732. Her high rank was recognised by chief Chekilli: Chekelli Talk, MS143, 11th June, 1735, Georgia Historical Society (GHS).

²⁹ DuVal, ‘Indian Intermarriage’, *William and Mary Quarterly*; Patricia Galloway, *Choctaw Genesis 1500-1700* (Nebraska 1995), p357. For a discussion on the complexities of kinship structures see A. A. Goldenweiser, ‘The Social Organization of the Indians of North America’, *The Journal of American Folklore*, Vol. 27, No. 106 (Oct. - Dec., 1914), pp. 411-436.

Amorous flexibility was limited within Euro-American *and* Indian communities, and the subtle sexual calculations made by Indian women when sizing up sexual and marital potential may have been lost on white males who were primarily focused on the availability of sex, rather than its attendant restrictions. For example, the pool of available sexual partners was limited due to complex rules surrounding incest and clans. The Cherokee had seven clans, and people could not marry or engage in sex within those clans.³⁰ Likewise, the Mi'kmaq had set rules, places and times for acceptable unions, sometimes endorsed by family members. For example, one young man had deserted the Royal Navy and fallen in love with a Mi'kmaq woman. He was assisted in his escape by her family and was protected by them, eventually marrying the woman.³¹ More traditionally, the clans gathered each year at present day Bedford Basin close to Halifax and enjoyed several ceremonies and events that also included an opportunity for girls and boys to meet – all under the watchful eyes of (dis)approving seniors. Where the Mi'kmaq often avoided extended female contact with British males due to hostilities, they could enjoy sexual relations and marriages with Acadians or Frenchmen (or deserters or loose-lipped enemies). Such men, used to relations with the Mi'kmaq, were less likely to abuse Indian customs surrounding sex and marriage. Therefore any brief relations formed outside clans neatly sidestepped concerns regarding inter-clan sex. Adair, perhaps not concerned with the need to enjoy sex with non-clan members, attributed the brazen liberties of the Cherokee women to their “petticoat-government”.³² Adair, no fan of Indian women’s sexual freedoms (unless he was making use of them) was not alone in his opinion of marital customs, and John Lawson added “They (women) never love beyond Retrieving the first Indifferency, and when slighted, are as ready to untie the Knot at one end, as you are at the other”.³³ Cherokee women changed husbands when they pleased, Creek women moved from husband to husband, and the Choctaw remarried frequently, too.³⁴ Rather than evidence of complete sexual abandon,

³⁰ Theda Perdue, “Columbus Meets Pocahontas in the American South”, *Southern Cultures*, (1997), p4-20.

³¹ Ruth Holmes Whitehead, *The Old Man Told Us*, (Nova Scotia 1991), p120.

³² Adair, *History*, p146.

³³ Lawson, *A New Voyage*, p186-8. Lawson also claimed that women were never punished for adultery. Meanwhile, Thomas Nairne, travelling through the Southeast in the same period, claimed that only men had the right to divorce their wives. Alexander Moore (ed), *Nairne’s Muskogean Journals, The 1708 Expedition to the Mississippi River*, (Mississippi 1988) p47. This would indicate significant variations in gender codes from town to town, even within the same Indian nation in this period.

³⁴ Adair, *History*, p142-146; Duane H. King (ed), Henry Timberlake, *The Memoirs of Lt. Henry Timberlake, The Story of a Soldier, Adventurer, and Emissary to the Cherokees 1756-1765*, (Chapel Hill 2007), p35; D’Artaguiette, *Travels*, p73; Lawson, *A New Voyage*, p188. H. B. Cushman, *History of the Choctaw, Chickasaw and Natchez Indians*, (Texas 1899), gives several examples of the multiple wives of Choctaw men, including sororal polygamy, which assured he retained the status of his wife’s clan even if he divorced one wife. Heckewelder, p259; Milfort, *Memoirs*, p209-211; Le Clercq, *New Relation of Gaspesia*, p260-261; Pickett, *History of Alabama*, p95.

women's sexual unions with white men were examples of tribal restriction and considered choice.

Ultimately, sexual experimentation and the “natural accident” of fornication was part of the transformation from adolescence to womanhood, and offspring simply proved a desirable fecundity.³⁵ However, these freedoms abruptly ended upon marriage.

Sexual punishments

Discussions that frame women's sexual activities in terms of violence, exploitation, licentiousness, promiscuity or prostitution privilege the views of contemporary witnesses who suggested that apparent acts of sexual transgression by women could provoke brutal punishments by Indian communities: in other words, that women's sexual actions were controlled. Such interpretations are viewed through a lens that imagined sexuality as something that should be monitored by men – even when the evidence showed the opposite to be true. Nonetheless, there did appear to be punishments for sexual transgressions that included harsh physical reprisals such as cropping of noses, hair, ears and sometimes lips.³⁶ Sexual freedoms therefore remain awkwardly juxtaposed with severe restrictions, attended by punishments conducted by vengeful, wronged people, all endorsed by apparent patriarchal authority. If such forms of rigid sexual control existed, their purpose remains unexplored and should not be taken as reflecting Euro-American gender values. This is particularly relevant when the act of ‘adultery’ is offered as an explanation for punishments inflicted on women, and any discussion of adultery without some interrogation of its meaning among Indian peoples provides an incomplete picture of sexual regulation.

Evidence shows that fundamental shifts in male perceptions of women and gender roles led to a significant alteration in how Indian men dealt with women, Native *and* white, as they sifted through sexual choices and material options throughout the eighteenth century. And as Indian towns and men responded to changes in circumstance, so too did they develop alternate ideas of community threats, violations and sexual mores that required new, appropriate forms of social censure and reproach. On returning from an expedition in the Southeast of America, the French traveller and Creek warrior, Louis Le Clerc Milfort, witnessed an “extraordinary and shocking ceremony”. Passing through a Choctaw village

³⁵ Romans, *A Concise Natural History*, p86.

³⁶ Adair, *History*, p145; John Lawson, *A New Voyage*, p188; D'Artaguiette, *Travels*, p73; Romans, *A Concise Natural History*, p98; John Pope, *A Tour Through the Southern and Western Territories of the United States of North America* (Richmond 1792), p56-57.

he was invited to watch an Indian woman endure a punishment for adultery at the behest of her husband, involving sexual intercourse with several men in succession. A “disgusted” Milfort refused an offer to take part in the event. Describing the proceedings he said,

...The husband assembles, without letting her know beforehand, his friends, a few relatives of the woman, and as many young men as he can find. When they are all gathered together, they detail one among them to ascertain if the woman is at home; when they have this assurance, they surround the house; the husband enters with two of the relatives of the woman; there, they seize her and take her off to a meadow where the savages are in the habit of playing ball.³⁷

A stake was placed in the meadow a quarter of a mile from the gathering. The woman was then stripped naked before racing two young men to the stake. If she won the race, she was absolved and ‘freed’ from marriage without further ado. Milfort recorded that she was a swift runner yet she was quickly overtaken resulting in the event that so appalled him. The punishment took place in 1781 and appears altogether unpleasant: an alleged sexual transgression that was publicly punished by sexual humiliation of the woman in question.

Other travelers also commented on this treatment of women by the Choctaws. Bernard Romans, an explorer, naturalist and writer, surveyed the Floridas between 1769 and 1772 and spent time among the Choctaws and Chickasaws. In 1776 he witnessed a similar event and presented an even more graphic account of the adulteress’s fate:

Her punishment is to be at a publick place (for that purpose set apart at every town) carnally known by all who choose to be present, young and old; thus the poor wretch after defending herself and struggling hard with the first three or four, at last suffers motionless the brutality of perhaps an hundred or an hundred and fifty of these barbarians.³⁸

Not only was there an allocated space for this spectacle but it potentially involved many more protagonists than those witnessed by Milfort. Writing in 1775, Indian trader James Adair recounted the revenge of yet another injured Cherokee husband (despite an absence of adultery laws in the Nation) who committed a similar act by rounding up a party of

³⁷ Milfort, *Memoirs*, p209-211. According to his memoirs, Milfort earned his status as warrior by taking part in military campaigns with the Creeks against the Americans.

³⁸ Romans, *A Concise Natural History*, p87.

warriors to carry out the punishment. In this case the female offender was forcibly restrained, tied down to stakes and endured forced sexual relations with “upward of fifty” males: as she had “loved a great many men...justice told them to gratify her longing desire,” added Adair.³⁹ In order to ensure “decency” in the proceedings, the punishment took place outside the village and beneath a blanket.

Between them, the three men spent many years among the Southeastern Indians learning customs and language, and marrying Indian women. The access to such knowledge and privileged positions among the people of the towns meant that they were quite confident in the accuracy of their observations. However, the certainty that they were witnessing a display of marital disharmony meant that deeper meanings of the events remained unexplored, and as a result closer scrutiny of these cases reveals a number of historical inconsistencies. The witnesses assumed that marriage held the same significance for Indians as it did for Euro-Americans; that Indian adultery held the same moral relevance as it did within white society; and that the adultery punishment reflected a husband’s rights to the use of his wife’s body in a similar fashion to Euro-American males. Further complicating the picture are numerous sources that depict far less gender-specific punishments for sex among Indians that punished both women *and* men equally, involving beatings and/or the cropping of noses, hair or ears.⁴⁰ Therefore, what was the purpose of these particular sexualised punishments?

These accounts would seem to indicate a very specific pattern of physical abuse towards women accused of sexual transgressions by their husbands. However, they also reveal a number of biases and prejudices regarding women’s positions within white society, which were ‘mapped’ onto indigenous cultures by observers who sought to make sense of reference points to help navigate native-white relations.⁴¹ Whilst outwardly criticizing the punishment of choice, culturally specific understanding of sexualised adultery punishments were constructed by Euro-American observers within a framework that sought to make sense of behaviour that mirrored some aspect of European social customs. These European norms assumed complete male control of women, including their bodies, upon marriage.⁴²

³⁹ Adair, *History*, p146.

⁴⁰ Adair, *History*, p145; Lawson, *A New Voyage*, p188; Diron D’Artaguiette, Journal of Diron D’Artaguiette in *Travels in the American Colonies*, Newton D. Mereness (ed) (New York 1916), p73; Romans, *A Concise Natural History*, p98; Pope, *A Tour*, p56-57.

⁴¹ See introduction.

⁴² Thomas A. Foster, *Sex and the Eighteenth Century Man: Massachusetts and the History of Sexuality in America* (Massachusetts 2006), p30. See also Vivien Jones (ed), *Women in the Eighteenth Century: Constructions of Femininity* (London 1990); Mary Wollestonecraft, *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman with Strictures on Political and Moral Subjects* (London 1796);

Consequently the sexualised violence perpetrated by Indian men on Indian women was simultaneously rejected *and* 'approved' of by white witnesses who viewed it as representing an aspect of a social order that was assimilable with white gendered customs. White men condemned the punishment as a poor show of patriarchal privilege, yet in certain circumstances they regarded it as an all-but-inevitable action among native peoples.

Milfort's refusal to take part in the sexual event was understandable: after all, intercourse with someone else's wife – in public – was beyond most Euro-American conceptions of appropriate behaviour. What is perhaps most striking about Milfort's account is that out of all three, he was the only one who described the woman's demeanour *after* the incident.⁴³ After leaving the ground he "returned to the village where, a few moments later, I saw this same woman, who did not appear to me to be very affected by the humiliation to which she had just been subjected".⁴⁴ Perhaps it was simply stoicism, but it is also possible that the event had *not* traumatized her as one would have expected. How far her ability to consent was compromised was another matter, though. Milfort added,

If she is the first to reach the white stake, the husband no longer has any rights over her, and her divorce is decided by this single act; when she is overtaken by the witnesses who run after her, she is sentenced to comply with the erotic desires of those who demand it of her. It is usually the one who caught her in her race who is the first to exercise his rights in this respect; he is then followed by all in succession, if they so desire: they are entirely free to do so. As there is perhaps no nation on earth whose customs are more revolting than those of the Tchactas, the result is that the adulterous woman is nearly always obliged to suffer the penalty to the end, and to gratify the savage lust of those whom her husband has chosen to dishonor her.⁴⁵

Afterwards the husband announced to the woman, "You are free now, you can take the man with whom you offended me". Milfort described the event as a 'repudiation' of the woman,

Mary Astell, (ed) Patricia Springborg, *A Serious Proposal to the Ladies* (Ontario 2002); Richard Godbeer, *Sexual Revolution in Early America* (Baltimore 2004); Sharon Block, *Rape & Sexual Power in Early America* (North Carolina 2006); Lawrence Stone, *The Family, Sex and Marriage in England 1500-1800* (New York 1977). Although it is possible there were elements of misunderstanding within any individual's account of Indians, the fact that all three men recorded similar incidents corroborates the events. As explorers, botanists and ethnographers, their accounts were more likely based in fact than fiction.

⁴³ Sharon Block discusses rape narratives that customarily omit female experiences preferring instead to focus on the male perception that they were victimised via attacks on their 'property'. Block, *Rape & Sexual Power*, p211.

⁴⁴ Milfort, *Memoirs*, p212-213.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.* This is not to suggest that she welcomed the event but the consent was perhaps viewed as being implicit with the agreement to a race and its attendant rules.

demeaning her future worth. This was perhaps the case but it is unlikely she had been earmarked (literally) as a reject in any way, and lacking a visible public reminder of lowered status, the woman simply returned to her lover or new husband. This event was a divorce *and* a punishment for transgressing rules concerning extra-marital sex. Although it was clear that the marriage was over, the purpose of the sexual activity was not, or why this particular divorce style was chosen when there were far simpler alternatives available.⁴⁶ Given sexual conventions among Indians, apparent distaste for sexual violence and fears surrounding spiritual purity, the sexual activity could only work effectively as consensual and symbolic sexual act, rather than an overt display of violent male privilege. In this case, the husband had chosen specific males for the ‘repudiation’. It was customary among many Southeastern peoples to seek permission before taking other sexual partners within the marriage, in much the same way husbands sought the permission of first wives before marrying second or third wives. Lawson demonstrated the civility that theoretically surrounded extra-marital sex when the husband or wife had full knowledge of the proposed sex, saying, “The Man proves often so good humour'd as to please his Neighbour and gratify his Wife's Inclinations, by letting her out for a Night or two, to the Embraces of some other, which perhaps she has a greater Liking to.”⁴⁷

If one chose to divorce first, that was also an option. In ideal instances, the husband was fully informed of the blossoming affections and with his blessing, extramarital affairs were duly sanctioned and publicly acknowledged. Essentially, the husband approved (or vetoed) the lover. Any revelation of an affair without his consent was inappropriate, of course, but even worse was the public shame, particularly if his wife was sleeping with a man he may have held some animosity towards. The deception would have been amplified by social embarrassment – the one thing Indians found hard to tolerate – and such a humiliation would have required an appropriate action to neutralise the disgrace. The symbolism in the sexual activity here suggests that the husband had conducted a public divorce to redeem his manly position and, as was customary, had ‘pre-approved’ the lover. If a man had truly had complete rights over his wife, as Milfort claimed, the race would have been unnecessary. The eventual punishment was therefore hardly a foregone conclusion: the woman’s last option may simply have been to choose her husband over her new lover and not race, thus

⁴⁶ Adair, *History*, p146.

⁴⁷ Lawson, *A New Voyage*, p35; D'Artaguiette, *Travels*, p48; Caleb Swan, ‘Position and State of Manners in the Creek or Muscogee Nation, 1791’ in *Historical and Statistical Information Respecting the History, Condition, and Prospects of the Indian Tribes of the United States*, Henry Rowe Schoolcraft (ed) (Philadelphia 1855), 5, p275.

settling the dispute. This incident, therefore, could be more appropriately categorized as a sexualized, ritualized, symbolic divorce rather than a straightforward punishment.

The incident described by Romans was more graphic. Unlike the woman above, this woman's punishment was determined by her lack of social standing. Not only was there no 'race' to speak of, Romans claimed that women were only punished for adultery if her family was of a lower status than that of her husband.⁴⁸ Evidently he was unlikely to "put her away" if she had "a stronger or more noted and numerous family": for such women, there was no punishment at all for adultery and they continued to sleep with whom they wished. Rather than a select group chosen by the husband, Romans claimed the woman was to be "carnally known by all who choose to be present, young and old". This unusually inclusive punishment is perplexing. It involved upwards of 150 males, and even if the amount of participants was exaggerated, such large numbers would have involved ensuring each male was not in any way related to the woman, to avoid violating the incest rule. Such taboos may have been circumvented due to the disruptions to gender orders from the previous century's conflicts with the Spanish and English settlers. Traditionally, men had enhanced their status by marrying out (of town and clan) and up into a matrilineage, but increased reliance on hunting over agriculture saw many women marrying out, frequently leaving family support and power behind.⁴⁹ Women who came from powerful clans could expect a great degree of authority over husbands who would have relocated to be with her clan, and marital rules were clearly modified depending on the particular circumstances of the couple. Women from lower families, slaves or those who had 'married out' were not afforded the same liberties. In this sense, sexual freedoms for women were related not only to unmarried women but to class. Indian slaves or refugees, although finding an eventual place within indigenous societies, occupied an ambiguous position. Without a strong family within the clan, or the possibility of making an influential kinship connection with another tribe, they lacked the political and familial status that allowed them to adequately resist any attempts at domination. As such, punishments were easier to enact without fear of inciting familial retribution. While such punishments do appear to show a disproportionate amount of power in the hands of the husband, potentially his fate may also have been subject to severe physical abuse had he been unfaithful to a high-ranking wife. However, the longer-term effects of unfaithful men had far fewer consequences than women's affairs, as shown

⁴⁸ Romans, *A Concise Natural History*, p86-87.

⁴⁹ Galloway, *Choctaw Genesis*, p346; DuVal, 'Indian Inter-marriage', *The William and Mary Quarterly*.

by the significant alterations in Creek lifestyles by women's marriages to white men throughout the century.⁵⁰

Adair's account from the Cherokees provides yet another perspective on the violence against women. Historian Theda Perdue discusses the status and position of most Cherokee women, and to those familiar with their exploits and behaviour within the sources, such an unpleasant display of aggression within marriage was quite incongruous with gender customs.⁵¹ Adair said of Cherokee women,

Their marriages are ill observed, and of a short continuance; like the Amazons, they divorce their fighting bed-fellows at their pleasure, and fail not to execute their authority, when their fancy directs them to a more agreeable choice.⁵²

The account, then, looks even more odd. The Cherokee had certainly seen their share of rapes by white men against Indian women but had not adopted any aspect of it within their own culture, as appeared to be the case among the Choctaw. Perdue's discussion of infidelity among Cherokee women emphasised the proprietary interest women had in men, and Lieutenant Henry Timberlake commented on the frequency and ease of divorce, stating that "it is common for a person to change three or four times a-year".⁵³ Such a sanguine approach to love and marriage makes this husband's attack even more surprising and would indicate that men had far more power over Cherokee women than has previously been suggested. However, other evidence does not bear this out. Adair added that this had happened only once among the Cherokee in his time in the Southeast, and this particular incident appears to stand alone as a true anomaly rather than part of a pattern of Southeastern Indian customs. In fact, with no laws against adultery the incident carried the hallmarks of a vicious revenge attack that mirrored the divorce custom of the Choctaws (and violent acts by white men), carried out by deceit. One of the more significant differences in this case was the lack of community involvement. Unlike the previous encounters, which included willing participants or a select few from throughout the town, these men came from the husband's family only. While this may have avoided any possibility of incest, the remaining circumstances indicate a personal grudge rather than a

⁵⁰ Kathryn Holland Braund gives a comprehensive economic overview of some of these changes for the Creeks in *Deerksins and Duffels, The Creek Indian Trade with Anglo-America, 1685-1815* (Nebraska 1993) and 'Guardians of Tradition and Handmaidens to Change: Women's Roles in Creek Economic and Social Life during the Eighteenth Century', *American Indian Quarterly*, Vol. 14, No.3 (Summer, 1990).

⁵¹ Perdue, *Cherokee Women*, p41-59.

⁵² Adair, *History*, p146.

⁵³ Timberlake, *Memoirs*, p35.

violation of community ethics that required public sanction. The revenge also took place unexpectedly for the woman: “by the information of their spies, they followed her into the woods, a little way from the town”. Adair describes this precaution as “decency” but in fact it looked like subterfuge. The use of the blanket to cover her fifty-plus assailants had less to do with decorum and was more concerned with concealing their actions, as they had undoubtedly overstepped authority in a flagrant transgression of sexual customs. The Cherokees also considered semen to be polluting, further indicating a specific level of personal animosity directed towards this woman.⁵⁴ Rather than a punishment, this was almost certainly personal revenge and well beyond socially sanctioned bounds. In a final comment, the husband would have married into a matrilineage and his accompanying male family members indicated that he was from close by and was able to rally support. Combined with his evident animosity for the woman, the additional ‘pollution’ of the land with sexual acts and semen suggests the husband may have been from an enemy or outside tribe. His acts certainly seem to show that he felt justified in his behaviour and secure enough in the knowledge that when her relatives sought retribution, he had the manpower to defend his position and his action. The attack, therefore, appeared personal, vicious, sexually directed and mirrored the contempt and aggression often shown by white men towards Indian women. Essentially, it carried the hallmarks of an Indian warrior’s revenge attack: the group of family males, cunning, stealth and group violence with symbolic meaning.

Adair also mentions an earlier period in 1738 when many Cherokee became infected with small pox, a turn of events the medicine people attributed to the “adulterous intercourses of their young married people, who the past year, had in a most notorious manner, violated their ancient laws of marriage in every thicket, and broke down and polluted many of the honest neighbors bean-plots, by their heinous crimes, which would cost a great deal of trouble to purify again.”⁵⁵ If the sexual punishment took place after either period of disease, the husband’s actions would indicate a possible connection with attitudes regarding the pox, purity, violation of fields and destruction of thickets and woods, the traditional environment for women’s farming and gathering work. Of course, if the punishment had taken place many years before, the old views of the medicine people may not have held so firmly. Nonetheless, his contempt pointed to a deeper hostility for his wife and women generally.

⁵⁴ Cherokee elders had complained of youths copulating covertly in fields, as spilling semen was considered to have a detrimental effect on the crop; Adair, *History*, p89, 232.

⁵⁵ Adair, *History*, p232.

In native societies, marriage had a larger significance in that it created kinship bonds that benefited the community. Once those bonds were established, divorce was a matter between the married couple, with a public nod of acknowledgement. However, within marriage there were many grey areas. Some men lived with their wives, while others were almost permanently absent. Some women accompanied husbands on hunts while others maintained significant financial independence. Other women adopted white marriage patterns while some lived in polygamous marriages, and throughout the first half of the century travelers described both severe censure for women while others reflect far more liberal attitudes.⁵⁶ This echoed the considerable variety of peoples in the Southeast in the period prior to the formation of the confederacies, all of which had numerous identities and customs, and differing levels of autonomy requiring diverse sexual regulations. Consequently, concepts of the importance of sexual behaviour, transgressions and subsequent suitable punishments were equally varied. Within these unions women would have sometimes outranked husbands. Age, status and the proximity of white men affected their choices, and within one town, two unmarried women may have experienced different levels of freedom and therefore different types of censure or restriction. Even within the same clan their sexual choices had various effects. Cherokee women were more likely to argue over unfaithful men than Creek women, and the infidelity of first wife in a polygamous union would have carried more condemnation than that of a junior wife.⁵⁷ Such mercurial social regulation provided restrictions on male privilege, and just as a woman suffered punishment for extra-marital sexual liaisons, a man's fate as an adulterer may have depended on his wife's level of authority and mercy. After the Seven Years' War and the Revolution, though, more coherence in sexual regulation matched the reorganisation of the nations. When Indian-white relations became more complex and fraught, so, too, did sexual unions with them.

As witness to punishment of adulterous women, Adair asked the Chickasaw the reason for chastising "the weaker passive party" and was told that "because their land being a continual seat of war, and the lurking enemy for ever pelting them without, and the women decoying them within, if they put such old cross laws of marriage in force, all their beloved brisk warriors would soon be spoiled, and their habitations turned to a wild waste".⁵⁸ The

⁵⁶ D'Artaguiette, p48, and Antoine Bonnefoy, p249 in *Travels*.

⁵⁷ Alexander Longe, 'Ways and Manners of the Indians Called Cherikkee', p32 in Perdue, *Cherokee Women*, p57. First wives were often married for familial connections, hence their role in the marriage had a different purpose.

⁵⁸ Adair, *History*, p145.

comment revealed not just new customs regarding sex, but a fear of unregulated female sex and the potential impact of affairs beyond kinship matters. Sex had taken on additional meanings and become politicized.

For example, in the Northeast, the Mi'kmaq marriage policy contained a detail that indicated something of an understanding of female sexuality within and outwith marriage. At the wedding feast of one couple, the town juggler (variously a sorcerer, priest or magician, depending on the observer) informed the bride that if she held any bad intentions, or would ever behave badly, the meat she was about to eat would kill her. The juggler, declaring her marriage obligations, added that,

If she is disposed never in her life to betray her nation, nor especially her husband, upon any occasion, or whatever may befall her: of unhappiness, if through the caresses of strangers, or by any means whatever she should be induced to break her faith to him, or to reveal to the enemy the secrets of the country.⁵⁹

Her role as a wife, then, did not reserve exclusive sexual rights for her husband. Instead, her role was configured along community lines. In this case, should she indulge in extra marital sex with the enemy, her primary concern was that she did not betray the Mi'kmaq. Sex with the enemy was fine as long as one kept one's mouth shut. It would follow that should the opportunity present itself, weaning information from the enemy via "pillow talk" would be equally advantageous to the Mi'kmaq. Even among the patrilineal Mi'kmaq ideas of appropriate sexual behaviour did not revolve around purely masculine needs. Like their Southeastern counterparts, the community's needs were prioritised over sex roles, and it was community requirements that drove the shaping of sexual behaviour also.

Where previously mind, body and action had belonged to women alone, the community now assumed partial responsibility, and the symbolism of intercourse in punishments reflected these interests. In these instances, the punishments appeared to be a conflation of traditional methods of reprisal where one partner "put away" the other, with a more modern custom that reflected the increased significance of the transgression, such as sleeping with an enemy man when it was detrimental to Indian male requirements. Anxieties regarding Indian-white relations then became localized and manageable, and war customs assumed domestic proportions, eventually assuming the face of chastisement. The

⁵⁹ Maillard, *An Account of the Customs and Manners of the Micmakis* p57-58.

variety of marriages (discussed in detail in the next chapter) would suggest that uniform application of these punishments would have been unlawful and hard to implement as a default punishment. Therefore, they were reserved for specific women or circumstances. They went beyond the control of marriage and the appropriate establishment of kinship connections, and indicate that women's actions may have had the potential for greater community harm. It was not marriage itself or even adultery that was being regulated, but the impact of the sexual acts.

Like the Mi'kmaq rule regarding sex, community betrayal and enemy secrets, it was not the sexual act that was punished (women were permitted sexuality) but any ensuing threat to the Indian community as a result of that sexual act. The punishments, then, should not be taken as evidence of overall domination of women's sex lives but an indication that their sexual choices required more careful negotiation than previous decades. Clan and personal advancement within the community and nation were no longer their only concerns, signifying a fundamental shift in tribal gender roles and an increased burden of responsibility on women as post-war white settlement dramatically increased. Their sexuality did not exist in a marital vacuum but was closely tied to political developments, European settlement, erosion of Indian masculinities and the reconfigurations of Indian femininity. Therefore, the sexual nature of these punishments was not designed to reflect an insult to the husband only, or a brutal subjection of women, but wider concerns of fidelity to the people, community and nation.

The sexually aggressive events described here appeared to be violent and punitive. Punishment had a particular function among indigenous peoples and suasive authority prevailed over coercive power, involving a more nuanced and subtle form of social control.⁶⁰ Beginning from childhood, people learned the harsh lessons of humiliation, and subsequent actions depended on the avoidance of embarrassment or mockery at the hands of peers.⁶¹ Children, for example, were dry-scratched with glass or fish teeth, leaving marks that served to remind the community of their offensive actions.⁶² Public ridicule developed awareness of the community and her or his position within it, enhancing self-regulation and placing the power of restraint in the hands of the individual rather than in those with authority. Lacking total authority over women, men may have been unable to exact the vicious punishments described using powers specifically designated to men alone, but a

⁶⁰ Claudio Saunt, *A New Order of Things: Property, Power and the Transformation of the Creek Indians, 1733-1816*, (New York 2006), p1.

⁶¹ Romans, *A Concise Natural History*, p88, 96.

⁶² Romans, *A Concise Natural History*, p96.

wider community endorsement may have prevailed. However, for the most part adultery punishments involved reprisals against both offending parties using the cropping of noses, ears and sometimes lips. Offending white traders found themselves severely beaten, lacerated and slashed with knives, and some women were whipped or had their hair cropped, but the purpose was to create a permanent, visible reminder to all who viewed the person that he or she had violated sexual and community protocols in some way.⁶³ The specifics of the rules may have varied from nation to nation but these sexually aggressive acts left no such permanent mark and therefore provided no visible message to the community of social transgression.

Rather than a straightforward display of excessive or 'barbaric' male privilege over subjected women, these punishments provide a significant indicator of gender customs, revealing much about indigenous concepts of femininity, and taking women's identity beyond that of victim.⁶⁴ Within these concepts, sexual actions are presented as one facet of a complex femininity rather than a male-defined category of native womanhood. Nonetheless, the question remains as to why the Choctaw men pursued such vicious retribution against their own women in light of their animosity and distress towards the sexual abuse of Choctaw women in previous centuries by Spanish and English colonists.⁶⁵ However confusing it may seem, the punishment seems to show that the repositioning of women within society was in response to these external pressures. The punishment mirrored the enemy acts Choctaws had previously resisted and, given the symbolism of many Indian punishments, the incident embodied the fears of previous decades whilst acting as a deterrent for seeking sexual connections with outside males, even within the community.⁶⁶ Essentially, war customs and fears had been reclaimed, internalised then utilised as a method of community control, allowing clans to make statements of power over others. However, as Southeastern Indian-white hostility, increased sexualised attacks became more common towards the end of the century and turned outwards on enemy women.

⁶³ Adair, *History*, p144-146; Pope, *A Tour*, p57.

⁶⁴ Romans, *A Concise Natural History*, p87.

⁶⁵ Galloway, *Choctaw Genesis*, and DuVal, 'Indian Intermarriage', *The William and Mary Quarterly*.

⁶⁶ Karen L. Anderson, *Chain Her by One Foot: the Subjugation of Women in Seventeenth Century New France*, (London 1991), p169-178. The Choctaws later insisted on white men securing a licence before attempting to marry a Choctaw woman to help protect the nations from "worthless characters" and ensure tribal identity remained intact: Cushman, *History of the Choctaw*, p371-373.

War and rape

In 1793 a Mrs Thrasher in Georgia suffered severe injuries at the hands of Creek men. In addition to scalping, she was “wounded in both her thighs, her right breast, with balls, and stAbbéd in her left breast with a knife, her left arm cut nearly off, as is supposed with a tomahawk” and later died from her wounds.⁶⁷ Other women were disembowelled and had their foetuses removed which, by the time of the Redsticks War in the early nineteenth century, were found impaled.⁶⁸ The disembowelling of pregnant women appeared among several eastern seaboard tribes, acting as an attack on the procreative capabilities of women and the subsequent expansion of white presence in Indian territory.⁶⁹ However, Indian sexualised assaults were less concerned with dominating *women* as such, and were more symbolic of greater concerns regarding settlement, sending a clear message to the white population that their presence would not be tolerated. Women provided the most appropriate means of conveying that message. A series of rapes of white women by Southeastern Indian men towards the end of the eighteenth century seemed to support a general hostility towards women but posed a more complex problem, or at least served another purpose beyond specific antagonism towards women.⁷⁰

Throughout the eighteenth century numerous observers, travellers and Indian agents attested to the fact that Indian men did not rape or sexually violate white women, particularly captives within warfare.⁷¹ Possible reasons for the indifference to women, as determined by eighteenth century white men, ranged from a general lack of virility, “impotence” and “the non-usage of salt” which apparently could cause a range of ‘ailments’. Other commentators almost viewed it as a form of good manners, propriety or

⁶⁷ Affidavit of Benjamin Rawlins, 28 February, 1794, in Saunt, *A New Order*, p152-3.

⁶⁸ Pickett, *History of Alabama*, p275; Benjamin Hawkins to Upper Creek Chiefs, 25 March, 1813, in Saunt, *A New Order*, p266; Block, *Rape & Sexual Power*, p223.

⁶⁹ Perdue, *Cherokee Women*, p88.

⁷⁰ Saunt, *A New Order*, p151-153. The accounts of rapes come from several sources and include attacks by Indians described as Creeks Muskogees and mestizos.

⁷¹ Adair, *History*, p164; Mary Rowlandson, A Narrative of the Captivity and Restoration of Mrs Mary Rowlandson, in Nina Baym (ed), *The Norton Anthology of American Literature*, Volume A, Sixth Edition (New York 2003), pp309-340; James Everett Seaver, *Life of Mary Jemison: Deh-he-wä-mis* (New York 1856), p234. For more details see DuVal, ‘Indian Intermarriage’, *The William and Mary Quarterly*, p289; Thomas S. Abler, ‘Scalping, Torture, Cannibalism and Rape: An Ethnohistorical Analysis of Conflicting Cultural Values in War’, *Anthropologica*, Vol. 34, No. 1 (1992), pp. 3-20; Richard Godbeer, *Sexual Revolution in Early America* (Baltimore 2004), p168-169; June Namias, *White Captives, Gender and Ethnicity on the American Frontier* (Chapel Hill 1993), p89; Andrea Smith, ‘Not an Indian Tradition: The Sexual Colonization of Native Peoples’, *Hypatia*, Vol. 18, No. 2, Indigenous Women in the Americas (Spring, 2003), pp. 70-85. In addition, there were no sexual violations of women in Loudon’s Narratives: Archibald Loudon, *Loudon’s Indian Narratives, A Selection of Some of the Most interesting Narratives of Outrages Committed by the Indians in their Wars, with the White People*, Volume II (Whitehall 1808).

gentlemanly consideration for women, and suggested white men return the courtesy and desist from raping Indian women.⁷² More contemporary analysis considers the purity rituals for men within warfare that forbade sexual contact with women lest the enhanced powers become neutralised, or the bar against incestuous relationships: captive women, as probable adoptees, were potential sisters or daughters.⁷³ Indian males did not view raping women as a 'perk' of warfare or an integral part of it. For white men it was certainly considered a 'by-product' of warfare and was used for strategic purposes, and the absence of such strategy should naturally point towards a more complex concept of womanhood, status and sexuality among Indians.⁷⁴ Sex was not something that could be forcibly taken from a woman and served no tactical purpose within warfare. In their detailed study of sexuality in America, D'Emilio and Freedman state that prior to European settlement prostitution did not exist.⁷⁵ However, when Adair, among others, claimed that Indians operated on the principle that women 'owned' their bodies, it naturally followed that those bodies could be purchased. Furthermore, if sex was a purchasable commodity, it could also be stolen i.e. that rape could occur. Therefore, if prostitution did not exist prior to European invasion, then neither did rape.

As young sexual women began to develop their inherent spiritual powers, often created, advanced and realised through violent exposure, any sexual attack on women or girls was most definitely an attack on a native, feminine spiritual power, and would have been a gross disrespect to Indian supernatural beings. The fine balance of gendered responsibility – derived from other-worldly sources – that existed within Indian societies was crucial to the survival and the smooth running of communities. Women had their areas of power, men had theirs. To violate women (native, captive or white) therefore, would have made a man complicit in the creation of something evil. Worse, it could provoke an unwelcome reaction

⁷² General James Clinton cautioned his army in 1779 not to rape Indian women because "they never violate the chastity of any women their prisoners", Abler, 'Scalping, Torture, Cannibalism and Rape', *Anthropologica*, p14. To one observer, Louis-Alexandre Deverite, lack of salt could contribute to a number of other Indian masculine 'ailments' including loss of appetite and lack of body hair, in addition to low sex drive. Cornelius J. Jaenen, ' "Les Sauvages Ameriquains": Persistence into the 18th Century of Traditional French Concepts and Constructs for Comprehending Amerindians', *Ethnohistory*, Vol. 29, No. 1 (Winter, 1982), p51.

⁷³ Godbeer, *Sexual Revolution*, p168; Perdue, *Cherokee Women*, p56; Namias, *White Captives*, p89. John Lawson was also convinced Indian men were not as "vigorous and impatient" in love as white men: Lawson, *A New Voyage*, p186.

⁷⁴ Wayne E. Lee, 'Peace Chiefs and Blood Revenge: Patterns of Restraint in Native American Warfare, 1500-1800', *The Journal of Military History*, Vol. 71, No. 3 (Jul., 2007), pp. 701-741; Jonathan Gottschall, 'Explaining Wartime Rape', *The Journal of Sex Research*, Vol. 41, No. 2 (May, 2004), pp. 129-136; Abler, 'Scalping, Torture, Cannibalism and Rape', *Anthropologica*; Block, *Rape & Sexual Power*, p210.

⁷⁵ D'Emilio, Freedman, *Intimate Matters*, p8.

and could only have had unfavourable consequences for the man and his community.⁷⁶ Discussing one Indian Shawnee warrior, Adair commented that he did not “attempt the virtue of his female captives,” attributing it to a reluctance to “offend the Indian’s God”. However, linking this to the value of prisoners discussed in the previous chapter and the uses and purposes of ritual torture, the same Indian man had no qualms in torturing his female captives. Violence against women (or people generally) certainly had its place, but not rape.⁷⁷ Adair adds a caveat to the virtuous warrior’s resistance stating that although the warrior did not gain sexual gratification from his captives, “...his pleasures heightened in proportion to the shrieks and groans of our people of different ages and both sexes, while they were under his tortures”. Adair appeared to be suggesting that restrictions on committing sexual acts of violence meant the Indian male was forced to gain his pleasure from torture instead. Essentially, though, the sexual domination of women was detrimental to Indian manliness whereas it often enhanced white masculinities, especially within warfare. Furthermore, violent actions, when not serving a community purpose, were reserved for enemies only. Ultimately, Indian masculine identity did not rest on the domination of women, but on the subordination and conquering of enemies as realised via other men.⁷⁸

To Indian minds, rape was dysfunctional and unnatural, and attacks on Indian women were often viewed as an act of war.⁷⁹ Therefore, the evidence from the late eighteenth century, which describes Indian men gang raping white women, is mystifying. If Indian men had previously *not* committed acts of rape within war, did this indicate a significant shift towards the internalisation of patriarchal structures that sought subordination of women? It is possible, but the warriors committing the attacks actively resisted changes to Indian lifestyles and rejected the new order of American masculinity such as that proposed by

⁷⁶ Adair, *History*, p164: “...they would think such actions defiling, and what must bring fatal consequences on their own heads.”

⁷⁷ Adair, *History*, p164.

⁷⁸ William Bartram observed the general good relations between Indian married couples, emphasising the lack of physical abuse towards women. Bartram, *The Southeastern Indians*, p152. Bartram claimed the women were ‘grateful’ in return, suggesting that he perceived a ‘default’ male identity aligned with gender domination. He equated the lack of “indelicacy or indecency” towards women with “an appearance of effeminacy”. The link he makes between non-manly Indian behavior and gentle treatment of women is notable here. Or in more direct terms, white masculinity and the physical abuse of women.

⁷⁹ Adair, *History*, p23, 246; DuVal, ‘Indian Intermarriage’, *The William and Mary Quarterly*, p290; Lee, ‘Peace Chiefs and Blood Revenge’, *The Journal of Military History*, p715-722; Richard White, *The Middle Ground: Indians, Empires, and Republics in the Great Lakes Region 1650-1815*, (Cambridge 1991), p315-365. Chilly McIntosh, Laws of the Creek Nation, 7th January 1823, provides a summary of Creek laws including those against rape. These required only the woman’s word that an assault had taken place. Her choice on punishment was final. Keith Read Collection, Box 6, folder 22, Hargrett Rare Books and Manuscript Library, University of Georgia, GA.

Hawkins in his tour of the Southeast at the end of the century.⁸⁰ In addition, their repeated entreaties to colonial leaders suggest their anger and disgust did not wane.⁸¹ Perhaps Indian men had adopted a new warfare strategy to match that of their enemies, with targeted, pointed assaults to revenge similar attacks on Indian women. Such actions though, would have involved a considerable repositioning of women's status within the Indian male mind. For most of the century, purity fears, incest taboos and menstruation had some role in deterring Indian men from sexual attacks on white women in addition to the potential aggravation of female spiritual powers. However, these attacks, like the adultery punishments, took place in the latter half of the eighteenth century by which time Indian nations had recognised their 'otherness' as determined by Euro-Americans.⁸² Internalising those ideals had allowed aspects of Indian Nativism to take root, with the recognition of Indian-ness as something distinct from white. It naturally followed then that white female identity was reconfigured within those new parameters. Therefore, as 'othered' females, white women were categorised outside the Indian race, thereby denying culpability for violation of Indian sexual codes. At the same time, internalising Euro-American gender practices and creeping Judeo-Christian concepts of gender relations within Nativist rhetoric combined to have devastating consequences for white women in particular.⁸³ Rather than an indication of a *general* hostility towards women, the attacks were targeted at the white race. Sexualised and symbolic, they were designed to ignite hatred and fear, and send a powerful message to settlers. Essentially, they attacked that which they by now knew white settlers cherished most: their property.⁸⁴

While it is true that Choctaws, like other nations, did not rape captive women, Adair emphasised that many women were raped post-purgation, and Choctaw treatment of

⁸⁰ Robbie Ethridge, *Creek Country: the Creek Indians and their World* (North Carolina 2003), p118, 147; Theron A. Nunez, 'Jr Creek Nativism and the Creek War of 1813-1814. Part 2' (Stiggins Narrative, Continued), *Ethnohistory*, Vol. 5, No. 2 (Spring, 1958), pp. 131-175; Daniel K. Richter, *Facing East from Indian Country: a Native History of Early America* (Massachusetts 2001), p230; Michael D. Green, *The Politics of Indian Removal: Creek Government and Society in Crisis*, (Nebraska 1985).

⁸¹ Lee, 'Peace Chiefs and Blood Revenge', *The Journal of Military History*; Abler, 'Scalping, Torture, Cannibalism and Rape', *Anthropologica*.

⁸² Gregory Evans Dowd, 'Thinking and Believing: Nativism and Unity in the Ages of Pontiac and Tecumseh', in *American Encounters: Natives and Newcomers from European Contact to Indian Removal 1500-1850*, Peter C. Mancall, James H. Merrell (eds) (New York 2000). See also Richter, 'Separate Creations' in *Facing East from Indian Country: a Native History of Early America* (Massachusetts 2001).

⁸³ Tenskwatawa's Criminal Code sought a much tighter regulation of women's lives and marital choices.

⁸⁴ Block, *Rape & Sexual Power*, p213. One historian viewed attacks on white women as part of a general Creek hostility and antagonism towards women claiming, "warriors expressed their masculinity through violence towards the opposite sex". The evidence supports more complex reasons behind these attacks prior to the early nineteenth century. Saunt, *A New Order*, p151.

women in war did seem to indicate a pattern of abuse towards women.⁸⁵ Romans reported one conversation in which Choctaw males described a custom called “running the meadow”:

The same treatment is undergone by a girl or woman who belonging to another town or quarter of the nation, comes to a place where she is a stranger and cannot give a very good account of herself and business, or the reason of her coming there... if a white man happens to be in the town, they send him an offer or invitation to take the first heat; they plead in excuse for barbarous a custom, that the only way to disgust lewd women is to give them at once what they so constantly and eagerly purse.⁸⁶

This points to another type of hostility directed at their neighbours and enemies, the Creeks. The Choctaws did believe Creek women to be more liberal with their sexual favours where Choctaw women restricted those favours, and any attack on these women would have been a denigration of the Creek people. Given the Creek customs against rape, though, it was highly provocative. Under Creek laws, clarified and codified by 1823, a woman’s claim to have been raped was upheld and her decision on appropriate punishment was final.⁸⁷ Therefore, returning the woman to her camp in a degraded and abused state would almost certainly send a defiant message to enemies and ensure retribution. On the other hand, it was also a very effective method for deterring enemy women from engaging in any cross-nation relationships whereby information could be carried from one tribe to another, thus protecting Choctaw integrity and military safety.⁸⁸ In this case, the rape of stranger females was tied into war practices with neighbouring tribes, and speaks of a people that were highly protective of their territory, suspicious of outsiders and prepared to act in any way necessary to discourage unwanted interaction. Choctaw hatred for enemies indicates that women from these nations could be expected to receive harsh treatments not as evidence of general misogyny, but as an indictment and commentary on the inferior status of their enemies, just as the male captive’s treatment during torture was designed to attack his entire people rather than just his person.⁸⁹ To control the woman was to control the people, whether clan, enemy Indian or settler.

⁸⁵ Adair, *History*, p164.

⁸⁶ Romans, *A Concise Natural History*, p87.

⁸⁷ Chilly McIntosh, *Laws of the Creek Nation*. While this custom acted as a brake on any potential Creek sexual offences against women, it also acted as a deterrent to outside males, particularly white men who lived on Creek territory.

⁸⁸ Rountree, ‘Powhatan Indian Women’, *Ethnohistory*; Tom Hatley, *The Dividing Paths, Cherokees and South Carolinians through the Revolutionary Era* (Oxford 1995), p149.

⁸⁹ Adair, *History*, p391.

For the Choctaw and other Southeastern nations, Indian masculinities appeared to be under assault. Connected with female sexuality, any changes to masculinities effected change in this area and direct assaults on Indian male identity was most obvious within warfare as it came head to head with strong expressions of white masculinity. The Choctaw incidents took place between the conclusion of the Seven Years' War and the American Revolution. Although theoretically a period of relative stability between Indians and Euro-Americans, the Choctaws had a long history of squabbles with neighbouring tribes such as the Creeks, and internal divisions between those who supported the British or the French. By the Revolution they had managed to remain somewhat neutral. The diverse ethnic make-up and fragmented nature of Choctaw foreign policy denied a united front and effectively allowed them to retain autonomy in the face of European powers who preferred a single, authoritative body to negotiate with.⁹⁰ During the Anglo-Cherokee War from 1758-61, the Cherokee had also suffered at the hands of the British, Choctaw and Chickasaw, endured a smallpox epidemic and lost much land to the British, agricultural, woodland and hunting grounds – a key source of masculine endeavour.⁹¹

Creek, Choctaw and Cherokee Indian nations operated within matrilineal structures.⁹² How far the effects of masculine-driven warfare and the humiliation of defeated warriors (in the Cherokee case) combined with the retention of female-owned land, clan name and property is hard to assess – such consequences could have taken time to make their presence evident in social changes. However, it certainly appeared that Indian conceptions of masculinity were under assault in this period as various Southeastern nations struggled to retain their authority alongside stronger – and less accommodating – colonial neighbors. The impact of defeat penetrated far deeper than land loss and had a significant effect on the manner in which men and women expressed essential elements of their gendered identities. Indian

⁹⁰ For a brief summary of eighteenth century Choctaw affairs see Patricia Galloway, '“So Many Little Republics”: British Negotiations with the Choctaw Confederacy, 1765', *Ethnohistory*, Vol. 41, No. 4 (Autumn, 1994), p518, and Jesse O. McKee, Jon A. Schlenker (eds), *The Choctaws, Cultural Evolution of a Native American Tribe* (Mississippi 1980), p35-37.

⁹¹ James Adair mentions a period in 1738 when many Cherokee became infected with small pox, a turn of events the medicine people attributed to the “adulterous intercourses of their young married people, who the past year, had in a most notorious manner, violated their ancient laws of marriage in every thicket, and broke down and polluted many of the honest neighbors bean-plots, by their heinous crimes, which would cost a great deal of trouble to purify again.” If the Cherokee sexual punishment took place after either period of disease, the husband's actions would indicate a possible connection with attitudes regarding the pox, purity, violation of fields and destruction of thickets and woods, the traditional environment for women's farming and gathering work. Adair, *History*, p232.

⁹² Galloway, “So Many Little Republics”, *Ethnohistory*, p518; Theda Perdue, *The Cherokees* (Chelsea House 2005), p10, p20.

men lost many 'avenues' of masculine expression to colonial victors. In addition to defeat, loss of grounds to white enemies meant an attenuation of hunting.

Economic transformation in the Southeast helped redefine gender roles and played some part in fuelling hostility towards women. Despite many areas of physical and emotional separation, Southeastern men and women had traditionally been linked through economic co-operation.⁹³ Attending hunts with men for the dressing of deerskins, both sexes had participated in rapid expansion of the deer trade throughout the eighteenth century. Such trade brought a wealth of material goods to families through the efforts of the hunters, such as kettles, cloth, guns, awls and other useful items. Therefore, with hunting as the primary economic pursuit of males, its heavy decline at the end of the century – and subsequent debt of Indian men to traders – not only affected manly pride but fostered resentment. As Robbie Ethridge states, "For Creek men, to be a man was to be a hunter and a warrior". To deprive him of this economic endeavour was to force him to relinquish his "social being".⁹⁴

The decline correlated with the diminishing of hunting lands, sometimes used to pay trade debts. As hunting land decreased, the co-operation of men and women in a unified goal ceased. Instead, women's opportunities for participation in the economy broadened, whilst retaining their essential expression of femininity: subsistence agriculture.⁹⁵ Kathryn Holland Braund notes the variety of ways in which they catered for traders with goods and clothing manufacture whilst charging "exorbitant" prices for foodstuff.⁹⁶ Their ability to determine prices sat at odds with the financial impotency of Indian men, therefore creating oppositional economic relationships with traders as intermediaries. Traditional masculinity discouraged farming as a means of seeking subsistence or providing for families, despite entreaties from well-meaning 'civilisers' such as Benjamin Hawkins. Adding insult to injury, women began to acknowledge alternative forms of manliness that accepted new economic provisions from white men. Rather than depend on Indian men to procure material goods, women went directly to the source. Women stood to gain "status, power, and economic security from their relationships with white men" and instead of working alongside Indian men now worked alongside their white husbands, widening the areas of

⁹³ Kathryn E. Holland Braund, 'Guardians of Tradition and Handmaidens to Change: Women's Roles in Creek Economic and Social Life during the Eighteenth Century', *American Indian Quarterly*, Vol. 14, No. 3 (Summer, 1990), p243-244.

⁹⁴ See Robbie Ethridge, *Creek Country: The Creek Indians and their World* (University of North Carolina Press 2003), chapter 9 on the frontier exchange economy, and Chapter 4 of this dissertation "Community Approval".

⁹⁵ Braund, 'Guardians of Tradition', p246.

⁹⁶ Ibid.

matrilineal influence.⁹⁷ In many ways, assaults on Indian women could be interpreted as assaults on women's choices or white men.

Economics, fragile masculinities and resentments were therefore firmly entwined. Beyond warfare and limited hunting, for younger men the traditional career trajectory looked unpromising. The question is: what happened to Indian gender roles when Indian women found potentially *greater* expression of feminine behaviors through the victors? For the Choctaw, at once on the fringes of the colonies yet important and still-threatening, retaining their hard-won position may have involved forcing compromise in female choices, stimulating the development of new cultural practices.

Sexual regulation

For most of the century, Indian males' lack of obsession over the sexual domination of women as a crucial indicator of manliness suggests that sexual or physical domination of women did not form a any basis for social structures in Indian lives. For observers, this often appeared as an absence of Indian masculine authority and was indicative of a general malaise regarding social affairs that Indian men had failed to address. James Adair pondered how it was possible for some Cherokee Indian men to attain high status in their clans given their inability to control women. He said,

They, who have the least knowledge in Indian affairs, know, that the martial virtue of the savages, obtains them titles of distinction; but yet their old men, who could scarcely correct their transgressing wives, much less go to war, and perform those difficult exercises, that are essentially needful in an active warrior, are often promoted to the pontifical dignity, and have great power over the people.⁹⁸

Adair's puzzlement was evident: as a basic requisite of masculine authority, leaders should *at least* be able to "correct their transgressing wives". However, it is worth considering the link between sexual freedom of women and the ownership of one's own body, and it does seem clear, at least, that female functions within Indian society did not depend on sexual subordination, willing or unwilling. The male aversion to violent sexual acts or sexual domination indicates that sex was linked to procreation and bi-partisan advantage, whether

⁹⁷ Mary C. Wright, 'Economic Development and Native American Women in the Early Nineteenth Century', *American Quarterly*, Vol. 33, No. 5, Special Issue: American Culture and the American Frontier (Winter, 1981), p526; Braund, 'Guardians of Tradition', p249.

⁹⁸ Adair, *History*, p81.

biological, familial or material. Essentially, intercourse entailed a positive, beneficial end result and the spiritual powers inherent within women were respected: removal from the fields at menses, purification rituals for men, shaman and healing powers of women, and the male avoidance of sexual contact with captive females.⁹⁹ However, towards the end of the century greater controls of female sexuality by Indian men began to enter Indian-white discourse.

In 1789, Abner Hammond reported that he had been informed that Creek chief Alexander McGillivray had held urgent talks with the headmen at Hillabees after receiving a letter from the American commissioners at a recent treaty.¹⁰⁰ In it, the Americans informed him that,

...they, the americans had fifteen thousand men ready to come to the Creek nation & that they were not coming to hurt them but to make them tame & that they the americans desired him to have a good many of the tame Indian women ready for them that they might incorporate with them & beget a tame breed of people...¹⁰¹

McGillivray immediately ordered all the headmen and warriors to remain at home to watch the women and children, and “to keep all their young men ready that he expected to have something for them to do in a little time”.¹⁰² McGillivray’s reaction showed deep concern, of course, and the order to rally the young warriors suggested that he feared an overwhelming assault rather than friendly relations. However, that women could be duly summoned for sexual and procreative duties illustrates the extent to which ideas of subordination and control of women existed among many white men, who assumed – or hoped – that Indian men held similar rights. Traditionally, such exchanges were down to women to decide on an individual basis but in this case, at least, cordial intimate relations may have been rather unlikely in the circumstances, hence McGillivray’s decision.

Faced with evidence that sexual controls were often determined by women Benjamin Hawkins maintained his disapproval of Southeastern women’s propensity to dominate household and tribal affairs, Nonetheless, Hawkins used their sexual assertiveness role to help advance his plan of ‘civilising’ the Indians. Where Creek men resisted attempts to turn

⁹⁹ Adair, *History*, p123; Cushman, *History of the Choctaw*, p497.

¹⁰⁰ Near Alexander City in present-day Alabama; *Collections of the Georgia Historical Society*, Volume 9, GHS.

¹⁰¹ Hammond in Relation to Indian Affairs, 20th April, 1786, Joseph Vallence Bevan papers, Folder 10, 1783-1788, MS 71, GHS, GA.

¹⁰² Ibid.

them into farmers, women appeared more amenable to Euro-American lifestyles, and Hawkins leapt at the chance to utilise their public voice and sexuality to control reluctant males, urging them to "...refuse favours to their sweethearts, and the married women to repel the caresses of their husbands, unless they would associate with them, and assist them in their daily labours." This was not widely enforced but Hawkins claimed it helped in "breaking the ferocity of the masculine temper, and reducing it to a milder and a softer tone".¹⁰³ Although many women were no strangers in using sex for material gain, the women had been accustomed to giving, not refusing it. Sex was viewed as a service for the benefit of women and clan rather than men. Hawkins attempted to turn the Indian female sexual identity into one associated with sexual restraint rather than indulgence, imbuing it with a moral worth that had little meaning for an Indian woman. In this manner, he had endeavoured to align the use of the female body with masculine interests and advancements, thus removing one of the primary functions of women's sexual behaviour.¹⁰⁴ Hawkins had made an effort to restrict the sexual activity of couples, perhaps believing that sex occurred only between attached women and men. However John Lawson's descriptions of nocturnal bed-hopping suggests that for every refusal, there were certainly other willing participants.¹⁰⁵ Hawkins envisaged sex and couples as a private unit and missed (or chose to ignore) how sex functioned in the wider community.

Without rigorous patriarchal structures in place, Indian societies did not position men at the top of society buttressed by auxiliary support from subordinates, but placed community interests at its core. Although many sources do locate men at the centre of the narrative, focusing solely on how female actions affected men narrows the vision on the couple rather than their place in the group, and in this case it would be more useful to examine sexual practices in how they relate to the community rather than the aggrieved man or husband. Indian men for the whole appeared to prefer a more malleable concept of sex and a denial of sex may have simply involved finding another partner or wife. By the end of the eighteenth century ideas of some form of masculine sexual control, if not ownership of women, were certainly more evident.¹⁰⁶ Nonetheless, most women ensured their clan concerns were attended to, daughters were married and that husbands managed some kind of hunting or trading return.

¹⁰³ Samuel L. Mitchill M.D, 'Progress of the Human Mind from Rudeness to Refinement: Exemplified in the Methods Pursued by Col. Benjamin Hawkins to Civilise Certain Tribes of Savages', *The American Monthly Magazine and Critical Review*, Vol III, No. 5, Sept. 1818, p358-362.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

¹⁰⁵ Lawson, *A New Voyage*, p187.

¹⁰⁶ See Chapter 5 for a detailed discussion of this topic.

Indian-White compatibility

Unlike Euro-American society, Indian marriage did not serve as a microcosm of indigenous society with its parallels in wider society. It had a minimal structuring function and as such did not hold the same significance to Indian communities. Where marriage served its purpose was in the kinship bonds it created: once established, the male and female physical union could either continue or disintegrate as desired, hence the frequent and easy divorces. Furthermore, reasons for keeping women sexually faithful within unions did not mirror European concerns that sought to regulate chastity, bloodlines, inheritance and even deviance.¹⁰⁷ Within Southeastern societies, the only bloodline that mattered was the mother's, and captive adoption, multiple fathers and the children of extra marital sexual relations ensured a wide range of blood penetrated clan ranks. Viewed overall, the role of a wife, as Europeans understood it, had minimal impact on sexual relations. Women expressed sexual autonomy and retained a full range of authorities within marriage.

Among the Mi'kmaq, divorce was common also. However, the women's sexual customs were intertwined with the community's needs again. Essentially, sexual desire was curtailed by concerns for resources, despite the apparently lustful males. What the Jesuit missionaries viewed as sexual 'modesty' was often down to the absence of evidence of the sexual acts, such as infants, or the reluctance to perform sexual negotiations in public, such as happened in the Southeast. In addition, the apparent modesty may also have been moderated by the availability of abortifacients and infanticide customs, which meant that any evidence of sexual activity was hidden or removed. As demonstrated in Chapter 1, the position of children within society was far less assured among the Mi'kmaq, and as a result sex and childbearing were sometimes separate concerns for women. Nonetheless, sexual compatibility was essential for enduring relations. Historiography of early North America that has examined sexual relations among colonists and settlers – particularly Puritans – shows clearly that although sex among married couples was welcome, even encouraged as part of a healthy relationship, its primary function was reproduction. Deviating from this principle was, indeed, sexual deviance.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁷ Block, *Rape & Sexual Power*, p47; John D'Emilio, Estelle B. Freedman, *Intimate Matters: A History of Sexuality in America* (Chicago 1997), p44-46; Kenneth A Lockridge, *On the Sources of Patriarchal Rage, The Commonplace Books of William Byrd and Thomas Jefferson and the Gendering of Power in the Eighteenth Century* (New York 1992), p50-54.

¹⁰⁸ See D'Emilio and Freedman, *Intimate Matters*, chapters 1 and 2 for a discussion of sexual mores of Puritans and Indians.

The relatively relaxed view of sex by Indians, often enjoyed by white men, did not deter some from attempting to educate women in their “conjugal duty”. However, success rates could vary dramatically because the Indian concept of physical ownership of the female body upset the convenience of aligning Euro-American marital/sexual ideal successfully alongside Native American marriage customs – leading to misunderstandings and confusion as to expected behaviour.¹⁰⁹ Where some men lived for decades in relative peace with Indian women, other white men found themselves with Indian sexual partners who were far less accommodating than they had hoped.¹¹⁰ Two women, also discussed in the marriage section of this dissertation, indicated the extent to which cultural values clashed – and could end marriages. Whilst travelling in the Carolinas, one companion of John Lawson was married with the approval of numerous women who celebrated the match. “Mrs Bride” enjoyed an overnight marriage before removing almost all the groom’s personal belongings and abandoning him the next morning.¹¹¹ Misunderstanding the nature of the encounter, he was subsequently rather “melancholy” about his experience. The flexibility of Indian marriage and its accompanying sexual mores allowed brief betrothals, particularly among ‘Trading Girls’.¹¹² Other men held out hope that a Christian marriage would convert their Indian partners into docile Christian women, and thus restrain their sexual proclivities. The Dark Lanthorn, a Cherokee woman, consented to a church wedding to her white partner but only after interrupting the ceremony repeatedly to ask after her promised material goods. Not long afterwards, the new Christian convert’s name was struck from the parish registry and entered into “the crowded pages of female delinquents” as a result of her adulteries.¹¹³ Her continued sexual behaviour, combined with her demanding queries on her wedding day, suggest that for the Dark Lanthorn, sex and material goods were natural allies. By exercising complete control over their sexual choices, regardless of marital situation, indigenous women had signalled clearly that sex was for women to determine. The practical gains as a result of sexual unions were also for women to determine, and sometimes those gains were not material but social and / or political. Milfort, friend to Alexander McGillivray, also found himself rather unwillingly thrust into the role of groom when a group of Creek women, apparently troubled by his lack of sexual

¹⁰⁹ Adair, *History*, p127; Romans, *Concise History*, p97. Romans described Chickasaw girls as “arrant prudes and coquets... though they will never scruple to sell the use of their bodies when they can do it in private.”

¹¹⁰ Bartram, *The Southeastern Indians*, p102, 152-153; Edward J. Cashin, *Lachlan McGillivray, Indian Trader, The Shaping of the Southern Colonial Frontier*, p71-72, 128; Benjamin Hawkins also describes a number of long-term marriages such as those of Sophia Durant and Mrs Bailey: Benjamin Hawkins, *The Collected Works of Benjamin Hawkins*, H. Thomas Foster II (ed) (Alabama 2003).

¹¹¹ Lawson, *A New Voyage*, p41.

¹¹² Lawson, *A New Voyage*, p35.

¹¹³ Adair, *History*, p126-129.

interest in them, selected a partner for him. “Compared with the others she seemed beautiful to me,” he said, agreeing to a tryst. When he met her in her room, he was seized by four women who demanded proof he was not a “capon-warrior”. Milfort’s alarm made it rather tricky for him to satisfy their requirements but he valiantly stepped up to the challenge and modestly admitted he “came out of the combat with honor”.¹¹⁴ His bride was Jeanette, sister of Alexander and Sophia McGillivray (later Durant), and with her role in the proceedings she hardly presented the blueprint of an obedient, subordinate or sexually submissive woman. In addition, given her sister’s rather powerful personality and her brother Alexander’s status as Creek chief, she had perhaps felt confident in selecting her mate so boldly. Her sexuality was proactive and located Milfort as a sexual being within her own world, as opposed to ‘offering’ herself to him, significantly altering the dynamic of sexual relations. It seems improbable that such assertiveness was easily subdued upon the continuation of these relationships.

Men – as the source of sexual satisfaction and its accompanying rewards of manly protection or material security – were replaced by material goods. In other words, men as marriage partners were supposed to be desired by women as a complete package: providers, protectors and masters. Instead, women had the capacity to make rapid decisions. Should she become a long-term wife? Was he of sufficient social standing? Tied closely enough to the nation? Perhaps. But often women reduced men to component parts, selecting the goods they possessed as their only desirable quality: the rest of the man’s qualities seemed neither here nor there. Afterwards men were often dismissed, as in the case of Lawson’s friend. In these instances, the woman herself was responsible for gaining material support by utilising men. Visiting white men, aware of these material bargains and their basis in sex, had often come to the erroneous conclusion that native women operated as prostitutes. Lawson’s somewhat crude language when describing the sexual transaction (paying “the Hire before he rode the Hackney”) indicates the extent to which these sexual transactions were misunderstood. With European categorisations of women that separated sexual (purchasable) women from other types of women – mother, wife, daughter, etc. – it left little room for men to manoeuvre. How else did a white man locate himself within this matrix as other than ‘a customer’? He was neither a beau, nor a husband (in his eyes), nor a family member and was certainly not viewed as an authority figure.

¹¹⁴ Milfort, *Memoirs*, p224-225. Capon – castrated rooster. Synonyms include cowardly or timid.

James Cookson clarified the expectations of men such as Lawson in his detailed discussion of marriage and polygamy, and was clear in his distinction between prostitution and fornication. Specifically, “Whoredom is prostitution for gain... and Fornication is the accidental criminal connection of the different sexes, without the formalities of marriage.”¹¹⁵ Lawson’s language suggested that he, like many of his contemporaries, concurred and managed to distinguish between sexual frolicks and the business act of sex. However, he was quite aware of the statuses of women, and attributed reduced sexual activity to the calming effects of marriage. For example, women of high-ranking status or those within successful trade marriages were unlikely to engage in brief sexual relations like that of Mrs Bride, and some tribes simply did not make a habit of sleeping with white men, especially groups that did not require or want any extended trade with them.¹¹⁶ For these women, their lack of extra-marital sexual activity pointed to increased status as opposed to evidence of sexual control and restraint. Simply put, unless he had something significant to offer, such as extended trade and colonial connections, high-ranking women would not necessarily have been interested. Beyond the need to indulge in romance, women married to high-ranking men or good providers also had little need for another husband, white or otherwise. Those who remarried often chose another high-ranking man.¹¹⁷

Women who refused romantic overtures were described as coy or virtuous by travellers, and Thomas Nairne on his visit to the Chickasaw in 1708 claimed that Chickasaw women rejected the traders’ sexual advances: the women emphasised that they were not like other women, presumably in reference to their enemies, the Creeks. They insisted all proposals for marriage be approved by mothers and uncles first, which was perhaps a little more formal (and time-consuming) than the traders had hoped for.¹¹⁸ Of course, it may have been easier for them men to view such rejections as the result of a declaration of piety as opposed to lack of interest, and would certainly have matched European expectations of appropriate female behaviour, but in some cases avoiding marriage altogether had its merits.

¹¹⁵ Cookson, *Thoughts on Polygamy*, p19-20.

¹¹⁶ DuVal, ‘Indian Inter-marriage’, *William and Mary Quarterly*, p300-303.

¹¹⁷ Sophia Durant’s mother, Sehoy, was married to at least two white men who offered significant social and material advantages. Mary Musgrove also married three white men of increasing status, finishing with the Reverend Bosomworth; Ben Marsh, ‘The Very Sinews of a New Colony: Demographic Determinism and the History of Early Georgia Women, 1732-1752’, in *Gender, Race and Religion in the Colonization of the Americas*, Nora E. Jaffary (ed), p. 47-52.

¹¹⁸ A. Moore, (ed), *Nairne’s Muskogean Journals, The 1708 Expedition to the Mississippi River*, (Mississippi 1988), p45.

William Bartram, who travelled extensively through the Southeast between 1773 and 1776, relayed the case of an Indian-white union where the husband, a trader, had descended into suicidal alcoholism due to the actions of his Seminole wife, who had dispensed his trade goods to her family. “He is now poor, emaciated, and half distracted,” said Bartram, “often threatening to shoot her, and afterwards put an end to his own life. Yet he has not resolution even to leave her, but now endeavours to drown and forget his sorrows, in deep draughts of brandy”. The marriage had apparently begun so promisingly. The woman, White Captain’s daughter, possessed “every perfection in her person to render a man happy...features beautiful, and manners engaging. Innocent, modesty, and love appear to a stranger in every action...”¹¹⁹ Despite her extensive womanly qualifications she appeared unable to fulfil the role of satisfactory white wife. However, she managed the role of Seminole woman perfectly well by utilising the customary female ownership of material goods to enhance her own status within her clan, the main source of friction with her husband. Also intriguing in Bartram’s account was his acceptance of a man’s rather narrow expectations of a woman or wife, and his correspondingly disregard for what *she* had evidently sought in a husband.

For Bartram, her womanly attributes and sexual allure were key determinants in her desirability as a partner. In other words, her sexual appearance was crucial but any corresponding sexual behaviour i.e. any *active* manifestation of that sexuality, was unwelcome for the man. In Bartram’s world, a suicidal man’s behaviour was quite understandable given the circumstances. Her behaviour, however, was not. For women, unaccustomed, unwilling or uncaring about white men’s ‘needs’ after the union, often believed they had satisfied the requirements of the union by providing sex in exchange for goods. To women’s eyes, a man should have simply accepted the nature of the relationship. For White Captain’s Daughter and The Dark Lanthorn, the ensuing behaviour of their sexual partners or husbands signalled an essential white masculine weakness. Therefore, the sexual behaviour of white men was used a barometer of character that indicated fundamental flaws and vulnerabilities in white men. For Indian nations, often raised to express emotion at appropriate times, the weeping husband of White Captain’s Daughter was inappropriate and undignified, thereby explaining her seeming contempt. Conversely, for white men, their inability to regulate the sexual activities of their wives meant an innate failure of manly duty.

¹¹⁹ Bartram, *The Southeastern Indians*, p47.

In these two cases, the ignorance surrounding sexual propriety and marriage customs were at the centre of the marital woes. For women sex could be temporary, strategic or functional, but White Captain's Daughter's story is interesting for additional reasons. In this case, she failed to recognise or acknowledge any form of manly authority within marriage whilst simultaneously undermining her husband's Euro-American masculine identity. With no apparent emotional connection to him, his plight was of little concern to her, and it would seem that female deference to males was not part of Indian sexual custom. Her outright rejection of patriarchal authority indicates most clearly the pattern of Indian sexuality and its attendant expectations, and like the case of the impatient Dark Lanthorn whose sexual liberties prevailed over her husband's pious interests, any attempts to 'own' these women generally failed miserably.

Ultimately, the sexuality of Indian women was variable, dependent on the man she was with, the customs of the nation she belonged to, the state of colonial affairs and relations between Indians and settlers. For every 'wanton' woman there was a modest one, and for every woman who moved from trader to trader, there were others who preferred their husbands – Indian or white – above others. Both North and South, sexuality adopted new meanings for those who opted for marriage. Nations that permitted a great deal of choice and flexibility in partners for unmarried women suddenly demanded new sets of behaviours for married women. Parents who had paid little attention to sexual partners developed a keener interest where marriage was concerned – essentially, marriage could be influenced by family input but sex most definitely was not. This would lead to the conclusion that sexuality and marriage occupied different parts of a woman's identity – one shaped by her own choices and personal or material needs, and the other by more wide-ranging concerns such as family relations, political liaisons, and material accumulation.

Roger Williams, president of the colony of Rhode Island in the mid seventeenth century, stated that although the Narraganset Indians believed "fornication" in itself to be acceptable, they held marriage in "a high and honourable esteem", believing "the violation of that bed abominable".¹²⁰ He may have been correct in this regard, but not because extra-marital sex was considered taboo. Before marriage, sex was permitted – it made no impact

¹²⁰ Roger Williams, *A Key into the Language of America: or, an help to the Language of the Natives in that Part of America, called New England* (London: Gregory Dexter, 1643), p143.

on a woman's value, and progeny as a result of sexual activity outside of marriage was also socially acceptable. Within matrilineal, semi-matrilineal, and patrilineal nations the bloodline of the husband was not necessarily of prime concern, and being attracted to another person was also understood as an inevitable aspect of human relations, hence frequent and amiable divorces.¹²¹ Instead, it was the abuse of rules surrounding sex and marriage that was the true violation – extra-marital sexual activity was simply one facet of the many ways to insult, denigrate or demean one's husband or clan. To fail to seek permission from one's husband for another lover (or for a divorce) was one method of achieving this.¹²² However, to the white observer, sexuality (as protected and regulated under English and colonial laws) would have featured high on the list of observable and comparable marriage traits.

It is perhaps for these reasons that views of Native American women's sexuality have been the focus of so much attention by observers. Sexual restraint for men and women distinguished the morally pure from deviants, and promiscuity signalled a flagrant disregard for such lofty values. Indian women, whose liberty was condemned even as it was wholly taken advantage of by colonial men, became the objects of a voyeuristic fascination. On the one hand they appeared materialistic, opportunistic, uncaring, sexually proactive and promiscuous bed-hoppers, and were "not destitute of charms to please the rougher sex."¹²³ On the other, women were weak and easily led, of "tender Composition, as if they were design'd rather for the Bed then Bondage", or were of "a mild, amiable, soft disposition, exceedingly modest in their behaviour, and very seldom noisy either in the single, or married state."¹²⁴ The patriarchal custom of restraining female sexuality within or outwith marriage meant that observers frequently associated the two (sex and marriage), and placed the male as a central player in both configurations. Consequently, the purposes and roles of Indian female sexuality became entangled in the minds of many white men,

¹²¹ Maillard's description of men wishing to help create a living image of themselves challenges this notion to some extent. As less likely to adopt, blood progeny may have assumed more importance, even as children were killed.

¹²² Lawson, *A New Voyage*, p188. Having described the apparent fickle nature of Indian women's sexual affections, Lawson adds an account of one woman who had had sexual relations with a white man. Having left the nation and married a white woman, the man returned later for further sexual relations with the Indian woman who had borne him a child. Upon hearing he had married another woman, she rejected him sexually saying that "she never lay with another Woman's Husband". Lawson appeared surprised that she had been so offended at the man's actions, claiming that women frequently "untied" the marital knot. In this case he had failed to seek permission to take another wife and had summarily been dismissed (divorced).

¹²³ Bartram, *On The Southeastern Indians*, p55.

¹²⁴ Lawson, *A New Voyage*, p188; Adair, *History*, p5, 145.

seeing materialistic and “whorish” behaviour where women saw a mutually agreeable opportunity: moral deviancy was not in question.¹²⁵

Despite social upheaval and many challenges to their autonomy, Indian women remained the architects of the (willing) sexual unions. Sex was for their personal benefit, for their clans’ benefit, and was used to enhance reputations whilst simultaneously achieving desired material commodities. To white eyes, women’s sexual activity appeared to defy rank, race, status or any observable criteria for discernment.¹²⁶ As a result the sexual union appeared wanton and licentious. Without a male to design the nature of the encounter, the sex lacked the moral worth that could only be validated by the express approval of a responsible male: because the validity of the union was determined by the woman’s concerns, Indian ethical codes remained invisible to men.

Still, with parental and community permission, young women continued to engage in sexual relations with settlers throughout the eighteenth century and sought appropriate males for such encounters. Sex produced some practical outcomes and marriage provided others, but as agents of their own identities Indian women carried the strong convictions and principles of adolescence – evident in their sexual behaviour – into sexual maturity and marriage.

¹²⁵ Lawson, *A New Voyage*, p35.

¹²⁶ Massachusetts Laws 1641-1660 prohibited sex between men and women outside marriage, punishable by death. Laws in Virginia regarding masters and servants or slaves were also enacted in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries regarding mixed race unions, punishable by imprisonment. Whitmore, *The Colonial Laws of Massachusetts*, p14-15, 30. Hening’s *Statutes at Large* also provides ample detail on the various laws surrounding sexuality, race and status: William Waller Hening, *The Statutes at Large, Being a Collection of all the Laws of Virginia from the First Session of the Legislature in the Year 1619* (Richmond 1819).

Chapter 4

Marriage

In 1797 Creek Indian agent Benjamin Hawkins found himself on the receiving end of a generous offer: one bi-lingual Creek Indian widow for marriage, with three beautiful children. The woman was “clean” and paid the appropriate attention to white people. To enhance the offer, the mother also indicated that the marriage could be for the duration of his stay “or as much longer as I thought proper”.¹

Hawkins was a well-known and respected Indian agent. A former US senator and confidant of Presidents Washington and Thomas Jefferson, he spent almost 30 years in the Southeast undertaking extensive travels through the region to meet the Creeks, foster alliances, and forge enduring social ties.² Perhaps, then, he should have jumped at the woman’s offer. However, the flexibility of the arrangement did not appeal to his patriarchal sensibilities, and he delivered a lengthy reply indicating his objections. Whilst complimenting the woman on the appearance of her daughter and her children he reminded her of the difficulties of such a union. He said,

I do not yet know whether I shall take one of my red women for a bedfellow or not, but if I do, if it is for a single night, and she had a child, I shall expect it will be mine, that I may cloathe it and bring it up as I please. If I take a woman who has sons or daughters, I shall look upon them as my own children.

The offer appeared very bold in its approach, particularly as it came from the lips of the widow’s mother. However, the mother demonstrated a fine level of political awareness and knowledge. In the first instance, the Creeks had suffered a great deal of change post American Revolution. Political alliances shifted with frightening speed, and a man with Hawkins’s connections could provide a little safety should American enemies come calling. Secondly, the mother was evidently accustomed to the concept of offering Indian offspring to pre-approved white males. In the third instance, the offer was designed to

¹ Foster, H. Thomas, (ed) *The Collected Works of Benjamin Hawkins*, 1796-1810 (Tuscaloosa, London: The University of Alabama Press, 2003), p83.

² Hawkins, *The Collected Works*, p. vii.

appeal to something that was customary among both Indian and white unions – temporary unions for specific purposes. In this case, the value of having the influential Hawkins as a family member. The mother also took care to indicate that her daughter was accustomed to behaving appropriately i.e. could perform white woman roles to satisfy a man of Hawkins's social standing. Her other daughter, after all, was married to a Mr Barnard with whom Hawkins was currently residing, and had made a successful marriage. Her language skills were indicated, Uchee and Creek, and what white man could be without a good interpreter in the Southeast? Finally, she had three healthy and beautiful children, and so her fecundity and productivity was assured. Simply put, the daughter had everything a white man could need or want whilst residing in Georgia: awareness of white social and marital customs, language skills, sexual experience and an easy divorce should it be required. In exchange, some political assurances and a degree of safety to help ensure the longevity of the family in political crisis.

Although Hawkins was the author of the encounter, it is the woman's actions that form the direction of this chapter's narrative. Politically astute, adaptable and proactive, the matron embodied the outlook on marriage that many women possessed. Displaying a strong knowledge of white masculine preferences, she revealed her willingness to incorporate them within Indian marital customs. At the same time, as a matron she demonstrated a formidable strength of will. Such force was necessary when dealing with colonial fluctuations that threatened to destabilise Indian tradition and communities.

Colonial trade, warfare and hostility formed the context for many Indian-European marriages. In the Southeast at the end of the century, Americans faced many of the same social problems that the British had already encountered – and subsequently defeated – when dealing with the Mi'kmaq in Nova Scotia. While the United States struggled to assert dominance among its Indian neighbours, the British had found themselves earlier in the century attempting to reach some kind of accommodation with the hostile indigenous peoples. In the Southeast, marriage could act as a bridge between nations, and women willingly entered into such unions. Marriage for the Mi'kmaq was on far more selective terms. Unaccustomed to sharing space and land with the uninvited, the Mi'kmaq were unlikely to mingle with – far less marry – white British settlers.

This chapter, then, explores and compares some of the above themes. The key issues will centre on varieties of marriage, purpose of marriage, marital choices and agency, sexual behaviour, and polygamy and adultery. Due to the balance of the available sources it is

weighted towards the Southeastern peoples. It starts with a discussion of the purposes of marriage in North America, before turning towards some examples followed by an assessment of marriage customs and their relationship with Southeastern and Mi'kmaq traditions. The chapter finishes with a summary of the key differences. Extracting the precise meaning and purposes of marriage from the sources presents many challenges. They are full of apparent gender confusions, and filtered through contradictory set of Euro-American gender binaries that assigned a set of characteristics to white women that had little relevance for Indian women. I have therefore minimised discussion of white marital customs as I do not believe they contribute significantly to understanding of women's intentions and purposes regarding marriage. If anything, they often present a "straw man" argument and derail the focus on Indian women. The story is complex and reflects marriages between Indian women and white men that were situational, practical, and even – on occasion – romantic.

While the variety of marriages were mostly acceptable to white men during the upheaval and years of conflict of the eighteenth century, a new non-British, all-American standard became necessary within the United States borders', as befitting the beacon of "civilisation" and democracy in the Western world. The Republic wished to incorporate Indians into their vision of an industrious, 'civilised' and productive nation peopled by independent, 'heroic artisans' and their supportive wives and offspring.³ For American men, marriage by the end of the century was entangled with Euro-American ideas of masculinity and performances of gendered power. Combined with the desire for expansion and land, men swapped defined social strata of the European for a vigorous, self-made man, master of his own land and family. This American was "vigorous, manly and direct, not effete and corrupt like the supposed Europeans. He was plain rather than ornamented, rugged rather than luxury seeking, a liberty loving common man or natural gentleman rather than an aristocratic oppressor or servile minion".⁴ Such a vision of masculinity required women to relinquish their traditional rights to authority and submit to their husbands, and President Washington's government agents were sent into Indian country to convince both men and women of the advantages of such a society.⁵ This approach advocated 'expansion with honor' rather than a brutal destruction of culture, best able to

³ Paula S. Rothenberg, *Race, Class, and Gender in the United States: an Integrated Study*, 7th Edition (New York: Worth, 2007), p89.

⁴ Rothenberg, *Race, Class, and Gender*, p96.

⁵ Thomas Jefferson, *Notes on the State of Virginia* (London, 1787), p101-102.

reflect the enlightened and advanced minds of the Republic.⁶ Benjamin Hawkins was uniquely placed to make that happen. After all, he had entertained the idea, if not the substance, of such marital unions.

Euro-American marriages were predicated on the expected subordination of the woman to patriarchal authority, whatever her social, financial and familial statuses were. Submission to husbandly rule was key to the smooth-running of a household, and where the female job description may have varied depending on locale and circumstance, her unquestioned loyalty to a male figurehead was almost certainly expected.⁷ Since Euro-American marriage was based on this agreement, the absence of unquestioned loyalty, compounded by Indian women's social and political superiority to many Indian husbands, affected the manner in which such women interacted with potential white mates.

In a good example of this, the match-making mother had wide-ranging and serious concerns, all of which could be answered with the simple act of marriage. But Hawkins's rejection of the union was based on something far more fundamental: patriarchal authority as the root of social function. Hawkins was acutely aware that despite all the attributes of the potential bride, Creek women simply did not obey their husbands. Notwithstanding the promises of the mother, the woman was unlikely to become submissive. In fact, even if he managed to convince his wife to adopt a more "pleasing and agreeable" nature, he would have had a far tougher time convincing her mother to do the same. Equally insightful as the mother, Hawkins also knew that no matter how subordinate his wife may have chosen to become, her family – particularly the match-making mother and her relatives – would almost certainly become a permanent and vocal part of their union. As such, he would never retain full control of his wife's activities or their children. He expressed unease at the "sole direction of the mothers" over their children, excluding the father from decision-making, and claimed he could only marry an Indian woman if he received as assurance of obedience from her and her extended relatives: "She must promise me this; her mother

⁶ For a greater discussion of 'expansion with honor', see Gregory D. Smithers, *Science, Sexuality, and Race in the United States and Australia, 1780s-1890s*, p. 25-27.

⁷ This topic is covered in detail by John D'Emilio & Estelle B Freedman, *Intimate Matters, a History of Sexuality in America*, (Chicago 1997). Women would also adopt roles such as 'deputy husband' in the absence of her husband, particularly for frontier wives who were often left for long periods when husbands left the homestead for work. Such women would assume male authority and relinquish it to the proper or appropriate male as and when occasion demanded. Mary Beth Norton, *Liberty's Daughters, The Revolutionary Experience of American Women*, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1996) p110-114.

must promise it to me, and all her family.”⁸ The matron was less than enthusiastic at this prospect. “She remained silent, and could not be prevailed on to acquiesce in the conditions proposed. She would not consent that the women and children should be under the direction of the father, and the negotiation ended there,” he said.⁹ Hawkins knew precisely where potential familial problems lay, and if one could not control his immediate family and her female relatives, what hope was there for the fledgling New Republic? In his rejections, he demonstrated all the anxieties of the American frontier settler and explorer facing Indian customs that could not be eradicated easily. By rejecting an Indian woman on those terms, Hawkins was also demonstrating the moral code of the new white man. This was not a wayward, back-country traveller, or a rum-smuggling trader, or an opportunistic, thieving ex-convict making his way among strangers. The United States was no longer a British colony and the men who now married Indian women would be better men, able to ‘raise’ the Indian moral standing without agreeing to short-term unions, abandoning children and ill-treating their brides.

Some evidence indicates that Hawkins did, in fact, marry a Creek woman. Four years before his death in 1816, Hawkins, concerned at his failing health, quickly married Lavinia Downs, the mother of six of his children. He also produced a new will distributing his estate amongst his family and at the time of his marriage he appeared to have been living with Lavinia for around fifteen years. Historian Merritt Pound points out that Lavinia was either a friend or acquaintance of Edward Price, factor at Coleraine, and had been dispatched to Hawkins’s home around 1797 to assist him with domestic management. The length of legally-unrecognised co-habitation would initially indicate an Indian-white union. However, there is no evidence to say for certain if she was Creek or otherwise. Pound adds that Hawkins’s lack of legal marital commitment may simply have been due to the absence of a minister, suggesting that Pound believed Lavinia was white. He further argues that Hawkins was openly critical of country or common-law marriages with Indian women, and refused a Creek wife in case it affected his influence among the Creeks.¹⁰ On the other hand, had Hawkins decided to marry according to Creek custom (if Lavinia was indeed Creek), then he was practising what he preached to the Indians: the benefits of a ‘civilised’ union. On Hawkins’s death, Lavinia and their children were the beneficiaries of his estate, protected under American law.

⁸ Hawkins, *The Collected Works*, p84.

⁹ Hawkins, *The Collected Works*, p85.

¹⁰ Merritt B. Pound, *Benjamin Hawkins, Indian Agent* (University of Georgia Press), p148-150.

Despite Hawkins's personal romantic situation, his conversation with the matron showed that the state of social and race relations had reached an impasse, and begged the question: what exactly *was* the purpose of marriage in this new America? Mark Rifkin suggested that the level of agency within Indian marriages was an indication of the purpose of the union.¹¹ For Euro-Americans it was a perpetuation of patriarchal convention, the structural basis for a successful society, a microcosm of the larger social order where everyone knew their correct role and position. It simplified life and allowed people to know exactly what was expected of them socially and sexually. In more direct terms it facilitated procreation, in itself a function of patriarchy and continuity of the male lineage.¹² Hawkins' problems with attempting to reconcile two nations, Creek and American, were compounded by the fact that many of his predecessors and settlers undermined similar ideals by doing the very thing he sought to eradicate: accepting female authority within marriage.

Matrilineages were the organising feature of Creek social customs, notable for their flexibility in power-sharing.¹³ Governed by female familial associations and broad concepts of motherhood, bloodlines and male lineage ceased to have meaning or significance. Instead, association with a clan, adopted, blood or otherwise, assured one's status. As a woman within that clan, as matron, mother or maiden, multiple interpretations of marriage were possible and even welcomed. Essentially, change was part of the matrilineal style and as a mother, like Hawkins' matron matchmaker, a woman's job was to keep one eye on political change, another on men, and alter custom accordingly. But this was far from surprising. The Creeks and their surrounding nations had conducted marriages between a variety of peoples for decades, even centuries, as they absorbed land and people, fostering an exchange of cultural values. Even as early as 1700 marriage could be as simple as one night, and was as solemn and binding as a permanent, lifetime of union. By the end of the eighteenth century a Euro-American style Indian-white union, with its attendant behaviours, had become part of the kinship rubric.¹⁴ White marriage customs had simply extended Indian possibilities. More importantly, the altered customs showed that for Indian women, marriages were not necessarily concerned with procreation of male lineage – one hardly had to be married for such an event to take place. Instead, marriage for Southeastern Indian women had complex and multiple associations that went far beyond childbirth and subordination to men.

¹¹ M. Rifkin, *When Did Indians Become Straight? Kinship, the History of Sexuality, and Native Sovereignty* (Oxford University Press 2011), p107-143.

¹² D'Emilio and Freedman suggest that marriage as having a function beyond procreation did not occur until the end of the nineteenth century, *Intimate Matters*, p173.

¹³ L. Stone, *Kinship and Gender: an Introduction* (Boulder, CO.: Westview Press, 1997)

¹⁴ John Lawson, *A New Voyage to Carolina*, (London 1709), p41.

What does appear to remain compatible with Euro-American ideals is that marriage served kinship purposes. The union of one clan to another, or one location to another, had obvious benefits for a people so geographically scattered and surrounded by enemies. As matron/mother/maiden within a matrilineal community, one of a woman's many functions lay in reinforcing kinship ties and obligations. Her role in marriage in this context had very little to do with the day-to-day functioning of the husband's role, as such, but was far more concerned with her family's connection with the wider community. In many cases, the man appeared to be a tool to help orientate and cement her position in society. His job was to help produce offspring, reinvigorate alliances and protect or hunt when necessary.¹⁵

Even as Hawkins wished to dismantle the matrilineal authority, he recognised its usefulness, and his approval of Indian women as compatible wives for American men makes some sense. In an untamed landscape in need of development, a strong and knowledgeable woman was required to supplement her husband's endeavours. Indian women, with their knowledge of the land and languages, of flora and fauna, were perfect companions to their adventurous husbands and an asset where Indian enemies were concerned. A pity, then, that Indian women's vision of the future was far removed from this. Perhaps it was their stubborn "mule"-like tempers but promises of subjection to patriarchal authority were hard for Indian women to keep (if, indeed, they even recognised such a thing) and they remained unwilling renounce their personal and familial autonomy for Hawkins's marital utopia.¹⁶ Hawkins offered few incentives other than to state, "we make companions of our women, the Indians make slaves of theirs".¹⁷

Hawkins' encounter acted as a perfect mirror of two systems of kinship. Where the flexibility of Indian marriage throughout the century had acted as a bonding agent allowing partnerships to be formed and, by extension, footholds to be gained in Indian territories, it had now become the point at which white-Indian values diverged radically. For within those core values lay the seeds of the future of American and Indian society. The official intention of Hawkins's extended stay in the Southeast may have been to seek unity and common ground with Indians, but his rejection statement revealed the actual purposes of his trip – and it had no place for female authority, white or Indian. Hawkins had signalled a

¹⁵ Some authors have indicated that the men felt drawn to their own offspring at the expense of their sisters' children. William S. Willis, Jr., 'Patrilineal Institutions in Southeastern North America', *Ethnohistory*, Vol. 10, No. 3. (Summer, 1963), pp. 250-269. It is unclear whether this is factual and documented or speculation.

¹⁶ Hawkins, *The Collected Works*, p253, 256.

¹⁷ Hawkins, *The Collected Works*, p84.

new power dynamic of race relations that placed the white man in a position of choice over whether he accepted an Indian partner or wife. Effectively, he had challenged the matron's authority and indicated that this new state of affairs was merely a taste of things to come. The days where women brokered the backwoods deals that determined the success or failure of trade and war were now over. Hawkins's marital vision was a metaphor for the new, appropriate place for the Indian within the union – marriage was to become a gender battle where one party sought dominance over the other, as part of the proper, godly order.

Although many travellers to the colonies displayed a great deal of flexibility regarding their unions with Indian women, this flexibility was based in the patriarchal categorisation of women. By assigning the women they were presently engaged with to the correct 'box', men could continue to conduct a relationship with women on their patriarchal terms without forsaking masculinity. These categories included wife, prostitute and concubine. A good illustration of this includes John Lawson's vividly-described encounter with the Congarees whilst travelling in the Carolinas with companions at the start of the eighteenth century, one of whom "reserved" a bed-fellow for the night:

The Female Indian, being no Novice at her Game, but understanding what she came thither for, acted her Part dexterously enough with her Cully, to make him sensible of what she wanted; which was to pay the Hire, before he rode the Hackney. He shew'd her all the Treasure he was possess'd of, as Beads, Red Cadis, &c. which she lik'd very well, and permitted him to put them into his Pocket again...the Match was confirm'd by both Parties, with the Approbation of as many Indian Women, as came to the House, to celebrate our Winchester-Wedding.¹⁸

The next morning the groom found himself abandoned, his wife having "pick'd his Pocket" and departed with all his possessions – including his newly-made moccasins. A somewhat unsympathetic Lawson commented that the Indians had "laugh'd their Sides sore" at the barefoot "Mr Bridegroom", who had had become "Batchelor, Husband, and Widdower" in the space of 12 hours.¹⁹

Lawson's description of the bridesmaids as "great Whores as Mrs Bride, tho' not quite so handsome" clearly showed that such marital bartering was commonplace, but three things regarding white male expectations of Indian marriage were evident. In the first case,

¹⁸ Lawson, *A New Voyage*, p41.

¹⁹ Ibid.

Lawson was fully aware that the Indian women viewed the arrangement as a legitimate marriage, even as he mockingly refers to the “bridegroom”. Secondly, although the marriage was regulated and formally, publicly approved by elders, Lawson repeatedly refers to the women concerned as “whores”, describing to the encounter as a broken “bargain”. Lastly, he mentions that the bride had disappeared with the groom’s goods, outwith those agreed in the discussions – she had “pick’d his Pocket”. The image of the encounter presented by Lawson is a little tawdry, and from a white male perspective, does not present Indian women in a favourable, trustworthy or moral light. Where Lawson saw only “whores”, thievery and lies, a transaction that saw a gullible man cheated, the marriage was honourable and honest from the bride’s perspective.

The divergence of opinion on correct marital/sexual behaviour began at the moment of transaction, where a woman apparently sold her body for material gain (prostitution). What Lawson failed to recognise was that the woman did *not* use her body to extract material benefit, but instead used marriage to extract those goods. Furthermore, the display of “treasure” made by Lawson’s friend was not evidence that he had the means to pay for the woman’s sexual services, but the display of his worth as a husband, as all Indian men were compelled to do to win the affections of a woman and her family.²⁰ As for the following morning, her thievery was no more than a normal and acceptable act of marriage – that within Southeastern Indian custom a woman owned all material goods on marriage. The companion was perhaps lucky to walk out of the town with the clothes on his back. In a final misunderstood act that appeared to be the actions of a thief, the woman had disappeared with the goods. Or rather, she had blithely dismissed (divorced) her husband the following day.²¹ Such divorces appeared to be commonplace with little or no social stigma attached to divorcees.²²

This incident shows that disproportionate focus on white men’s perspectives on female behaviour is detrimental to understanding the role of marriage and sexuality. The assumption by Lawson and his men that the women were mercenary and untrustworthy in sexual bargains limits understanding in other areas, too. Their determination to view it as an act of prostitution allowed them, and readers, to overlook an interesting fact about this particular marriage, namely the public regulation of sexual and marital unions. Even more

²⁰ Lawson repeatedly refers to unmarried women who were sexually active as “whores”, *A New Voyage*, p35, 41.

²¹ Lawson, *A New Voyage*, p41.

²² James Adair, *History of the American Indians*, p142, 146; Hawkins, *Collected Works*, p163; G. A. Waselkov, & K. E. Holland Braund, *William Bartram on the Southeastern Indians*, eds. (Lincoln, London: University of Nebraska Press, 1995), p18, 47.

interesting is that family members would also have presided over these arrangements. To unquestioningly accept Lawson's view would be to erroneously assert that Southeastern Indian people did not just offer their daughters in marriage to strangers, as Hawkins's matron did, but actively pimped them to passing travellers. However, since Southeastern peoples had no concept of body ownership, prostitution – as white men understood it – did not exist. Effectively, the use of her body was for her own benefit rather than viewing it as something that benefited males. His sexual pleasure, or whether or not he received 'value for money', would have had little concern for an Indian woman.

The Lawson account of marriage showed that the woman had few expectations of that particular husband. At the same time, she indicated that the act of sex was a component of marriage but *not* for procreative purposes, a crucial distinction between white marital custom and Indian. In fact, Lawson was quite clear that "Trading Girls" had "an Art to destroy the Conception": those who carried such children were considered "fools".²³ So how was a white man to accommodate such conflicting messages within the matrix of European marriage customs? What was he experiencing? A shambolic marriage with an unfaithful wife and an empty purse, or a cynical, publicly approved act of prostitution with an immoral people? As a white man, the latter was infinitely preferable to entertaining the former: a man who couldn't keep his wife or money under his control. The shame of the second could be attributed to the poor character and unpredictability of the female character, and therefore borne more successfully than the first (which could be blamed only on his failure as a man and husband).

Lawson's confusion over Indian marriage was mirrored by many of his contemporaries. Throughout his account he described what appeared to be similar marriage customs to those of Europeans, whilst struggling to understand his own contradictions. Women were purchased, female adultery was punished and marriage required formal and solemn approval from the girls' parents as details were agreed between the parties concerned.²⁴ This indicated parallel patriarchal patterns. At the same time, sexually active women were considered more marriageable and desirable by higher ranking males, and "Likewise some of their War Captains, and great Men, very often will retain 3 or 4 Girls at a time for their own Use."²⁵ Women also engaged in extra-marital sex with their husbands' knowledge. Therefore, Lawson's view of Indian women is created within this troubling gender

²³ Lawson, *A New Voyage*, p188.

²⁴ Lawson, *A New Voyage*, p35.

²⁵ Lawson, *A New Voyage*, p35.

confusion: an apparent “patriarchy” where men chose and bought women for their own needs, but a system that also approved and encouraged sexual freedom of women (and presumably men, too) inside and outside marriage.²⁶

Whilst acknowledging that some Indian-white marriages were enduring and successful from early to mid century, such as those of traders like Lachlan McGillivray and George Galphin, many of these were predicated on the absence of traditional European power structures and acquiescing to alternative, Indian masculine forms of power.²⁷ Indian masculinity, unconcerned with control and domination of women, was performed and displayed to other men via successful hunting and acquisition of goods, which were then dispensed as gifts or taken by wives. The display did not include large and lavish accommodations, or the endless accumulation of goods. Those white men who were prepared to accept these new gender parameters in exchange for economic advantage fared well. Allied to Indian families with guaranteed physical protection, the white man who did not cheat his relatives out of trade goods could expect a good return on his marriage with few financial impositions or commitments. However, this often required a certain emotional detachment from wives – in much the same way as women expected physical and material separation from their husbands. However, the hapless white man who sought an emotional donation to the marriage from his Indian wife would often find disappointment. The recording of the men’s reactions to Indian marriages allows an analysis of the wives’ views of the union, thereby indicating a little more about the various purposes of marriage.

Material goods

The Dark Lanthorn, a Cherokee woman, grudgingly consented to a Christian church wedding to her white husband but only after interrupting the ceremony repeatedly to ask after her promised material goods, to tell the priest his speech was “troublesome and light” and to call her groom an “evil spirit”. Not long afterwards, the new Christian convert’s name was struck from the parish registry and entered into “the crowded pages of female delinquents” as a result of her adulteries.²⁸ The groom had hoped that his bride would “be

²⁶ Despite his rather disparaging comments regarding marriage and Indian women, Lawson himself had a wife in North Carolina whom he referred to as his “dearly beloved Hannah Smith”. In his will he provided for Hannah and their daughter Isabella. Charles R. Holloman in W. S. Powell, *Dictionary of North Carolina Biography Vol. 4* (University of North Carolina Press 1991).

²⁷ A. J. Wright, *The McGillivray and McIntosh Traders On the Old Southwest Frontier 1716-181* (Alabama 2007), p77, 81.

²⁸ Adair, *History*, p126-129.

taught the conjugal duty, by virtue of her new Christian name, when they were married anew".²⁹ James Adair did not give a precise date for this incident although it occurred between 1735 and 1775, but the activity of the bride throughout the solemn occasion is revealing.

Said Adair, "Observing that marriages were commonly of a short duration in that wanton female government," the Dark Lanthorn's husband had been eager to have the marriage sanctified by the Church, thereby permanently securing his bride.³⁰ The groom had believed that by marrying within the English Church the Dark Lanthorn would recognise its legitimacy and, by extension, his authority as her husband. The husband had shown a remarkable degree of faith, not just in the power of religion and the Church, but in his wife's ability to cast off her Cherokee upbringing and embrace the patriarchal light. He had intended also that she would "be taught the conjugal duty, by virtue of her new Christian name, when they were married anew," in reference to her sexual activities and his desire to restrict them.³¹

At the same time, the groom had been fully aware that material goods had drawn her to the altar, and "as she was no stranger to the English settlements, he soon persuaded her to go down to the Conggarees, to get the beloved speech, and many fine things beside". In a mirror of the female character that Benjamin Hawkins was to complain of some years later, her temper was less than amiable during the ceremony. After agreeing (via an interpreter) to some form of chastity within marriage, the interpreter then relayed the marital vows that required she use "proper care in domestic life". She objected vehemently then added, "but...where are those fine things you promised me?" Sensing that his bride was becoming impatient the groom had quickly added that "she should have plenty of everything she liked best; at this she smiled". The marriage then proceeded with elements of confusion and irritation on the bride's part. Attempts to explain the concept of the Holy Trinity were hurried over as the groom sensed her interest in the ceremony waning, and he persuaded her to become baptised only by some quick thinking and the promise that placing the water on her face "would be a sure pledge of a lasting friendship between her and the English, and intitle her to everything she liked best."

²⁹ Adair, *History*, p127.

³⁰ *Ibid.*

³¹ *Ibid.*

The Dark Lanthorn's behaviour was far from romantic and made it clear that her presence at the event was contingent only upon some form of compensation or payment of material goods. Adair described The Dark Lanthorn as a Christian Indian but spirituality or romance seemed to be the furthest things from her mind. As a convert she was "a lamp of Christian light" but was soon to become a "delinquent" based on her adulteries. Her husband, it seemed, had not secured her sexual fidelity. Perhaps his goods had not lived up to his marital promises, or he had simply failed to produce enough of them, but whatever way we examine the story, both parties evidently lacked a shared vision of marriage. The Dark Lanthorn sought material goods and an open-ended marriage: spirituality and her husband's needs did not appear to be a concern. The groom sought fidelity, loyalty and a perhaps a legitimate means to control her 'wayward' nature. He, however, recognised her needs, which would have clearly fallen within his role as father, husband and provider in the European marital paradigm. However, he had woefully mistaken her neediness for material goods as an expression of dependency, and dependency meant leverage. He appeared to truly believe that she had accepted material security in exchange for masculine authority. Instead, The Dark Lanthorn demonstrated that her "neediness" was, in fact, an expression of requirement. It raises questions about the role of a husband because in matrilineal societies (of which she was a member), husbands appeared to come and go with some frequency, demonstrating temporary and non-binding unions with women.³²

In Indian weddings, after all terms had been agreed, the physical exchange of material goods or symbolic items took place in almost all instances.³³ Bernard Romans described it simply: "they marry without much ceremony, seldom any more than to make some presents to the parents, and to have a feast or hearty regale at the hut if the wife's father." Writing at the end of the eighteenth century, Loskiel described the expectations of women within matrilineal societies. After declaring that divorces were frequent and that women were often forsaken once she had begun breastfeeding, Loskiel then stated:

³² Some accounts contradict stories such as this. John Haywood, in *The Natural and Aboriginal History of Tennessee, up to the First Settlements Therein by the White People, in the Year 1768*, was very clear that Cherokee wives were purchased and "the woman has not the power of refusing". He added that, "After she has served him as a slave, contributed to his pleasures as a mistress, borne him children, and taken care of his hut, he often takes another wife, and parts with her as unfeelingly as if she had never existed." The Dark Lanthorn may well be an exception but her behaviour, along with other women, suggests this was customary. Haywood's account was most likely his interpretation of what he believed he was witnessing, a barbarous marriage.

³³ George Henry Loskiel, *History of the Mission of the United Brethren Among the Indians in North America* (London 1794), p57; Waselkov, G. A. & Holland Braund, K. E., *William Bartram on the Southeastern Indians*, eds. (Lincoln, London: University of Nebraska Press, 1995), p97.

The women also forsake the men, after having received many presents, and knowing that they have no more to expect. They then marry another, from whom they may expect more. It frequently happens that the woman forsakes her husband, because she never loved him, and was only persuaded by her relations to accept of him for a time, that they might keep his presents. The Indians therefore consider their wives as strangers. It is a common saying among them, “My wife is not my friend,” that is, she is not related to me, and I need not care for her.³⁴

However simple the ceremonies were, in matrilineal societies the husband’s commitment to provide meat during hunting season, and skins from the carcasses, was a serious matter. The husband produced meat as and when she requested – and it did not have to be for the husband’s consumption. “Most married people understand that whatever the husband gets by hunting, belongs to the wife”, said Loskiel.³⁵ In other matrilineal societies, males owed the product of their hunt to wives and offspring *and* their mothers and sister.³⁶ This indicates that there were fewer obligations of the woman towards her husband, and there is also a suggestion that she owned some, if not all, of his labour. On the other hand, the produce of the fields was also his, and the wife was obligated to provide the husband with that food at home and abroad. Here, there appears to be a reciprocal dependency – both parties provided goods and essential labour for the other with no hierarchy of dependency.

Dependency

Karen Anderson has shown that for other matrilineal societies, dependency was not really a feature of the marriage for women. For example, Huron women did not depend on husbands for meat as much of this was procured through reciprocal community dependencies, exchange networks that existed through clan affiliations and memberships. Men, however, had moved into their mother-in-law’s homes and were dependent for daily foods. Anderson points out that the marriages were often temporary but like the Mi’kmaq, they had a co-habiting engagement of sorts, at least until the first child was born.³⁷

An interesting comparison can be made with the Mi’kmaq where women at times provided food only for men, sometimes going without in favour of males, or allowing males the first

³⁴ Loskiel, *History of the Mission*, p58.

³⁵ Loskiel, *History of the Mission*, p60.

³⁶ K. Anderson, Chain her *By One Foot: The Subjugation of Women in Seventeenth-Century New France* (London, New York 1991), p113.

³⁷ K. Anderson, Chain her *By One Foot*, p114.

portions of food. The patrilineal Mi'kmaq, according to the Recollect missionary Chrestien Le Clerq, denied women access to political decision-making and even to feasts. Women could accept “the remains of the portions left by their husbands”. Despite appearances, historian James Axtell suggested that the Mi'kmaq were not as chauvinistic as Le Clerq surmised, indicating that hosts, young unseasoned males and children were also not permitted priority foodstuff.³⁸ Such initial observations do skew the perceptions of gender and marital relations somewhat, with Le Clerq also stating that women “must needs obey the orders of their husbands. They have no rights in the council, not in the public feasts.”³⁹ He adds, “It is the same, as to this, with the young men who have not yet killed any moose.” When Le Clerq linked female submission to husbands, the suggestion was that *women* were submissive to males. In fact, wives may have shown deference to husbands on occasion, but it was far from clear that women were submissive to senior males in general. Mi'kmaq women exerted an enormous amount of influence in their communities overall. If there was indeed a structured hierarchy within the marriage, then the purpose of marriage in the community was different to that of Southeastern women. However, there is little evidence to support this. Le Clerq repeatedly described the excesses of the many feasts that the Mi'kmaq held, for events such as hunting, warfare. He also claimed that there was “very little distinction between rich and poor,” adding that reciprocal sharing and generosity was an important part of the Mi'kmaq culture. Those who had excess food gave it to others, regardless of gender, or threw it on the fire.

The main feasts included celebrations for hunting, war, peace, thanks, farewell and health. At least two of these were almost male-only celebrations: war and hunting were male dominated activities, activities on which the towns' livelihoods depended. Given the importance of male performance at key moments in the year, it would make sense that first choice on the banquet would, for practical purposes, go to participating men. This cannot be seen as evidence of submission of wives or women in general terms. In fact, Le Clerq pays a great deal of attention to the role of the father in the marriage of a suitor and prospective bride but in actual fact, neither party was ever forced to marry.

³⁸ J. Axtell, *The Indian Peoples of Eastern America, A Documentary History of the Sexes* (New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981) p148-150.

³⁹ Axtell, *The Indian Peoples*, p149.

Hence it is that the fathers and mothers of our Gaspesians leave to their children the entire liberty of choosing the person whom they think most adaptable to their dispositions, and most conformable to their affections.⁴⁰

Le Clerq's narrative is a little confusing in places. It denigrates the position of the women – particularly wives – socially whilst also stressing co-dependency and cooperation, and the virtues of sharing with others. He stresses the subordination of wives whereas social subordination was, in fact, by everyone, host included, to hunting and warring males at certain times of the year. Like many Indian nations, sharing one's largesse was viewed as a sign of status and graciousness, and indicated an implicit dependency, of caring for those you were more fortunate than. It was a gesture of inclusion and community, and interpreted differently shows kindness and affection, a recognition of others' needs. At the same time, the formality of feasts was hardly an indication of daily life. Le Clerq added that women, “cut up, slice off, and give away meat as they please, but the husband does not get angry.”⁴¹ In this instance, food was a female priority on a daily basis with men taking priority during special occasions. And if women were dispensing meat beyond the family (as in Loskiel's accounts) the expression of grace and largesse – and social positioning – were as open to women as it was to men. Le Clerq offered some fascinating insights into Mi'kmaq marriage, although the Eurocentric gendered language clouded the matter somewhat. Whilst appearing surprised that the “head of the wigwam” never appeared irate over the dispersal of food or any of the goods he procured for his family, Le Clerq generated a picture of domestic bliss, citing the woman's attentiveness to housekeeping duties and her eagerness to earn herself “the reputation of a good housewife.”⁴² The ‘house’ was a mobile wigwam and rather than keep the house spic and span for her husband, her husband's hunting tasks supported her own, and vice versa – after all, there were very few material goods or status objects to care for. Her reciprocal tasks included making snowshoes, making canoes, tobogganing, gathering foods, dressing skins and preparing food.

The attention devoted to marriage and courtship also paints a picture of people looking for proper, loving, enduring unions. Le Clerq states that there was little hierarchy economically among the Mi'kmaq, which denied any material motives for marriage. However, later in the eighteenth century there is certainly evidence of status among the

⁴⁰ Axtell, *The Indian Peoples*, p85.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Ibid.

Mi'kmaq. Whether that affected marriage choices is unclear. However, long courtships continued well past mid-century, which put paid to any brief marriages. It also restricted marriages to white men, especially the British who settled and developed major towns such as Halifax. Access to Mi'kmaq women became restricted when the British imposed trade controls and implemented new trading methods. Rather than take goods to the Indians as traders had done for decades, Indians were now expected to bring their goods to a trading house.⁴³ The French traders such as Nicolas Denys who had previously encountered the apparently shy and modest Mi'kmaq maidens had secured the best opportunities to marry them, by moving into the paternal house for anything up to four years. In this time a man would hope to impress his potential father-in-law with his hunting skills and personality, assuring the family of his amiable disposition, too. The white men succeeding the earlier French settlers had far less exposure to Indian women, and therefore opportunities for marriage to British men were limited. Divorce was likely without children in any case.⁴⁴

The Mi'kmaq present a very different marital environment, where attempts to find longer-term matches was of far greater importance than among the Southeastern and matrilineal peoples. Marriage here was of fundamental importance, and the search for an “amiable” man for daughters shows that a conciliatory nature was preferable for a new family member, rather than the goods he or she may bring to the union. Marriage in this case would appear to be a foundation of the Mi'kmaq society and provided a valuable function, with observers citing the duration of some marriages, deep marital affections and the public grieving of husbands over the loss of wives. Rather than simply remarry, such a loss could drive a man “to the most distant nations, there to make war and to drown in the blood of his enemies the sorrow and grief which overwhelm him.”⁴⁵ The loss of a partner among Creek or Cherokee did not seem to generate the same emotional response for women, although the uses of ritualised violence for both Northeastern and Southeastern nations certainly offered a forum to express loss. Le Clerq did indicate the levels of devotion between couples and, given the time and effort in keeping both parties happy prior to marriage, it is unlikely that one sex indiscriminately dominated the other in the relationship. Both nations, it would seem, benefited from reciprocal dependency of one form or another.

⁴³ Jeffrey L. McNairn, ‘Meaning and Markets: Hunting, Economic Development and British Imperialism in Maritime Travel Narratives to 1870’, *Acadiensis, Journal of the History of the Atlantic Region*, Vol. 34, No. 2 (Spring 2005), p3-25.

⁴⁴ Axtell, *The Indian Peoples*, p84-86.

⁴⁵ Axtell, *The Indian Peoples*, p87.

Loskiel suggested that reciprocal dependency among matrilineal nations was the reason why many Indians did not share common goods on marriage, in order to avoid being left destitute at the death of the other. This is further proof of dislocation of female and male emotions for Southeastern peoples, and sexual or marital relationships that were not intended for longevity. But the commitment – if not the emotional bond – was crucial. Upon death, women entered a period of “mourning”. Adair said, “The Muskohgee widows are obliged to live a chaste single life for the tedious space of four years.” Chickasaw women observed this period for three years. For other Indian nations it was as little as one year. Loskiel added, “For the Indians say he does not forsake her before that time, and then his soul goes to the mansions of departed spirits.”⁴⁶ In this time the woman lived by her own industry and other tribal members avoided excessive assistance (although subterfuge was employed on occasion). Indian men even believed their guns would have failed had they offered her any meat they had killed.⁴⁷

After the mourning period family or friends proposed new partners. Most contemporary observers mentioned only women following this custom but Loskiel indicated that some men were also obliged to mourn their deceased wife in order to ensure continuing good faith with the deceased’s family.⁴⁸ There are two points to note here: one is the importance placed on continuing familial connections beyond death. The second is that within Indian custom, the deceased was still present within the living world, albeit in spirit form. Under these circumstances, for a man to provide meat for the widow would be an affront to the still-present husband, and would surely affect the harmony of the tribe. This custom has frequently been presented as an exercise in feminine chaste devotion and the romantic expression of loss for a husband: to marry her or offer assistance would be to incur a curse or ill fortune of some description.⁴⁹ At the same time, it also appeared to be a custom designed to control the sexual activities of women and determine their marital patterns. However, an alternative explanation is that it functioned as a means to control the deceased. Essentially, the husband was the potential curse-giver, not the wife, and the distinction is important. It removes the idea that the woman bore the stigma. The instances where she *did* bear social stigma was if she indeed remarried before the mourning period ended. However, this was simply the equivalent of marrying another man without

⁴⁶ Loskiel, *History of the Mission*, p64.

⁴⁷ Loskiel, *History of the Mission*, p65.

⁴⁸ Loskiel, *History of the Mission*, p64.

⁴⁹ Richard A. Sattler, “Women’s Status Among the Muskogee and Cherokee”, in Laura F. Klein, Lillian A. Ackerman, (eds) *Women and Power in Native North America* (University of Oklahoma Press, Norman and London, 1995), p220.

observing the proper protocols that required approval from the existing spouse, discussed further in this chapter.

Marriage appeared to be versatile, short-lived if necessary, and therefore not a structural component of Southeastern Indian society, and where children and issue were welcomed, lingering spouses who had overstayed their welcome, or had little further purpose, were summarily ejected from the union. As a white man, failing to appreciate the female requirements in an Indian-white marriage could have unforeseen consequences for a man expecting eternal devotion and submissive affection from his wife.

In William Bartram's account of White Captain's daughter and her suicidal husband, she had apparently used a full range of feminine wiles to entrap her wretched and unsuspecting white trader husband. She was beautiful, innocent and modest in her actions, and this "little charmer" had artfully deployed these weapons to beguile her husband, making him an "unhappy slave".⁵⁰ Bartram then continued to exhort the virtues and credentials of the husband. In contrast to his wife, the man was "a stout, genteel, well-bred man, active, and of a heroic and amiable disposition". He had made his money through trade with the Seminoles and had subsequently attracted the attention of the alluring White Captain's Daughter who had then proceeded to "drain him of all his possessions". According to most Southeastern customs, all material goods became the wife's upon marriage. Under English law, the wife's possessions became the husband's, a sacrifice that was off-set by her acceptance and her integral role in the family that placed her husband at the centre of affairs. However, it was apparent that for White Captain's Daughter, any concept of family did not include her husband. He was a means to help her extend her influence and status within her family, but he was not to be part of it. Confusingly, Bartram claimed that her father had publicly disapproved of her behaviour. However, the father would not necessarily have received any goods – the male 'paternal' figure in her life would have been her maternal brother. By the time Bartram left the camp, the trader had endeavoured to "drown and forget his sorrows, in deep draughts of brandy".

There are several interesting things to note in this vignette. One is that the husband had a very practical function for White Captain's Daughter. Although she may have perhaps been a little mercenary in her delivery, it is evident that for women the acquisition and dispersal of material goods was a part of Indian marriage, and that the husband was a

⁵⁰ Bartram, *On The Southeastern Indians*, p47.

means to that end. Secondly, she would almost certainly have been raised to seek out and assure alliances with such men, as was customary. This was one of her functions as a woman and it was vital to the status of her family that she performed this task. Her own advancement within the clan was a bonus, and it is curious that her social status could be progressed as readily as any elder or matron. The coyness and girlish play-acting that many observers commented on seemed to have been part of the ritual.⁵¹ I am unable to ascertain whether this was part of Indian-Indian sexual courtship rituals, or whether Indian women performed this task for white men only. John Lawson did suggest that after women had secured a marriage for the night using various flirtations, that they were somewhat efficient afterwards about the consummation: “Our happy Couple went to Bed together before us all, and with as little Blushing, as if they had been Man and Wife for 7 Years.”⁵² Such conflicting messages – coy flirtations followed by business-like efficiency – could certainly be interpreted as insincerity and deception. Bartram had clearly believed that the character of the husband should have secured him a more worthy bride, but his descriptions polarised the personality types so extensively that a clear miscommunication of marriage purpose is evident. Beyond sex, whatever a white man wanted from his Indian wife was not forthcoming. At the very least, the woman showed that not only did she not recognize her husband’s authority, she simply had no concept of it, and no social mechanisms existed that could enforce it.⁵³

After all this, it is little wonder that white men hoped to secure affection and perhaps obedience through “official” marriages. Regarding the Dark Lanthorn’s husband, he evidently had enough material goods to warrant her attention (if not devotion) but a year later she had strayed. Perhaps he had fallen on hard times like White Captain’s daughter’s beau. But what of the men who did not provide material goods in marriage? In some cases families became involved. Where particularly high-ranking families were concerned, it is very likely that the woman already recognised the significance of her role in the marriage and would have assented willingly, knowing the social enhancement it would bring her clan – and consequently herself. This is sometimes reflected in the historiography as evidence of female subjugation to family and men. For example, Richard Sattler has suggested that, “Women, at best, had only the right of refusal of an arranged match.”⁵⁴ However, this disregards the significance of oral tradition. In oral societies, a verbal refusal

⁵¹ Bartram, *On The Southeastern Indians*, p47; Lawson, *A New Voyage*, p183.

⁵² Lawson, *A New Voyage*, p41.

⁵³ Loskiel, *History of the Mission*, p58.

⁵⁴ Richard A. Sattler, “Women’s Status Among the Muskogee and Cherokee”, in Laura F. Klein, Lillian A. Ackerman, (eds) *Women and Power in Native North America* (University of Oklahoma Press, Norman and London, 1995), p219.

was an extraordinary power and Sattler's analysis misses the concept of refusal in this particular society and the weight it held. For example, how would a verbal refusal of peace be received? A verbal refusal of food and shelter? A verbal refusal to engage in talks? For a society governed by personal accountability, peer pressure and the avoidance of social embarrassment, a public refusal of marriage was potentially devastating. For a young man it was acutely embarrassing, carrying with it implications of his masculine shortcomings. For another clan seeking alliance, it could mean something far worse.

To be on the receiving end of a marriage offer was a serious matter, especially when unions were proposed that were concerned with cementing status and connections. Rank, authority and warrior skills all had their attractions that were on a par with material gain. Milfort recounted in his journal that he had been heavily pressured into marriage to the sister of Creek Chief Alexander McGillivray. Jeanette was appealing enough for him but the women of the family had not only lured him with the promise of sex with Jeanette, but had insisted on viewing the consummation. Recognising the precarious situation he was in and the implications of refusal of such a high-ranking woman, Milfort readily agreed to the marriage.⁵⁵ Milfort had presented the debacle as a group of determined women manipulating a helpless (and mildly inebriated) man in a weakened state. However, the women concerned in the affair were of high social rank, the Wind Clan, and under matrilineal custom were the architects of marriage and the creators of chiefs.

Long term unions

Of course, many marriages were of a longer duration and there is little doubt that when two people found harmony together and companionship, there was little reason to end the union. Despite the temporary arrangement of many marriages in the Southeast, several observers mentioned the warmth and length of others, such as the Mi'kmaq unions described previously. William Bartram also recalled some warmth between couples attained through what appeared to be genuine affection and care for each other.⁵⁶ John Lawson agreed, saying,

As they grow in years, the hot Assaults of Love grow cooler, and then they commonly are so staid, as to engage themselves with more Constancy to each other. I have seen several Couples among them, that have been so reserv'd, as to live

⁵⁵ Milfort, *Memoirs*, p225-226.

⁵⁶ Lawson, *A New Voyage*, p36.

together for many Years, faithful to each other, admitting none to their Beds, but such as they own'd for their Wife or Husband: So continuing to their Life's end.⁵⁷

Women required different types of marriages depending on their circumstances, and these engendered appropriate behaviour and responses. For the woman who had married for material goods, the emotional attachment was not required. For couples routinely accustomed to separating once each partner had fulfilled his or her needs, no offence was likely to be taken when no displays of grief were forthcoming at the end of the union. Nancy Ward (Nanye-hi), a famous Cherokee Chief, had fought at her husband's side in 1755 at the Battle of Taliwa against the Creeks. When the Kingfisher (her husband) was killed, she took his place in the fight earning her the title of Beloved or War Woman, and securing her a significant amount of tribal authority.⁵⁸ Many Cherokee women had fought in battle in the eighteenth century but Ward's additional display of bravery and devotion to her husband had earned her special recognition, particularly as it generated an enhanced anger at their mortal enemies. But even white men could provide long-term companionate relationships, especially when the woman and man shared a common goal: not seeking spiritual harmony but material and social security.

Lachlan McGillivray and Sehoy of the Creek Wind Clan enjoyed a long term union, around 12 years, with five children. As a Scottish trader who arrived in the first half of the eighteenth century, Lachlan remained on the periphery of the Creeks for many years, usually in Charleston in South Carolina, leaving Georgia only at the American Revolution.⁵⁹ Lachlan had returned to Charleston in 1764 accompanied by his son, Alexander, who became educated and went on to become a renowned Creek chief. This was most likely done with the consent of Sehoy. Although little is known of their relationship, and Lachlan did not appear to discuss personal business in his letters, the fact that he remained cordial with Sehoy after their divorce (he had another white family in Charleston) was testament to their relationship and his ongoing appreciation of good relations with the Creeks generally. He was, after all, a trader. Sehoy had evidently found that white traders suited her purposes and after Lachlan's departure she married trader

⁵⁷ Bartram, *On The Southeastern Indians*, p114-115.

⁵⁸ D. H King., (ed) *The Memoirs of Lt. Henry Timberlake, The Story of a Soldier, Adventurer, and Emissary to the Cherokees 1756-1765*, (Chapel Hill 2007), p122.

⁵⁹ Waselkov gives a detailed breakdown of the Sehoy family tree, her children and her family connections. His attention shows an overdue appreciation of matrilineal descent, and pays more than lip service to its significance to the Southeastern politics. G. A. Waselkov, *A Conquering Spirit, Fort Mims and the Redstick War of 1813-1814* (Tuscaloosa: The University of Alabama Press, 2006), p36.

Malcolm McPherson with whom she had another three children. The children from her several marriages, particularly the women, became tightly woven within the trading networks of the Southeast and amassed considerable holdings. For example, one of her daughters, Sophia Durant, had several children, marriages, land and slaves. Sehay's final marriage was possibly to an Indian headman but she was almost certainly present at Milfort's escapade, and very probably engineered the marriage to her daughter (the chief's sister). Her mother's marriage to a French fort commander shows that she was accustomed to Indian-white marriages as a viable means of social advancement and material support within Creek society, and that their choices had been guided by more than evidence of Indian masculine accomplishments. No scalps were required but a steady stream of trade goods and some colonial connections could go a long way.

Serial wives

Other powerful Creek women made good use of their white husbands, some as serial brides. Endemic warfare often gave rise to the supposition that the death of males left a surplus of women and therefore accounted for the existence of polygamy. There may be some validity in the statement as there are some examples of the existence of polygamous marriages.⁶⁰ It would therefore follow that the high death rates of Indian men through warfare should have indicated an increase in polygamy. However, incidences of these marriages declined throughout the century. In fact, the loss of a husband was just as likely to encourage multiple marriages for women as they moved from one man to another.⁶¹ In the absence of a plentiful supply of Indian men, the preferred alternative appeared to have been the adoption of a white husband rather than assuming a position as one of several wives within a polygamous arrangement. Part of this could be attributed to the adoption of white customs as women were increasingly exposed to white men and sexual unions. However, the evidence suggests that women retained the majority of their marriage customs even with white men, remarrying or divorcing when necessary. Cherokee women appear to have been particularly adept at this custom, and were able to "drive" their husbands to abandon, thus securing a "divorce" and allowing her the freedom to remarry.⁶² As Adair described it, the women,

⁶⁰ Lawson, *A New Voyage*, Romans, Hawkins, *The Collected Works*.

⁶¹ T. Perdue, *Cherokee Women, Gender, Culture and Change, 1700-1835* (Lincoln, London: University of Nebraska Press, 1998), p44.

⁶² *Ibid*.

Plant their brows with horns as oft they please, without fear of punishment. On this account their marriages are ill-observed, and of a short continuance; like the Amazons, they divorce their sighing bed-fellows at their pleasure, and fail not to execute their authority, when their fancy directs them to a more agreeable choice.

Sehoy Marchand became Sehoy McGillivray then remarried yet again to an Indian man.⁶³ But perhaps the most famous example is Coosaponakeesa, or Mary Musgrove-Matthews-Bosomworth. The records show a woman who was focused on achieving security and status as she moved with relative ease in white circles as part of her social advancement. Fluent in English and Creek, Mary was the niece of the Coweta chief, Brimms. Like Alexander McGillivray many years later, she was also a trader's child. She lived with and was educated by an English family until she was around 16 and in 1717 she first married John Musgrove, the son of a British trader. The marriage was part of a peace agreement after the Yamasees War, which saw a rapid decline in traders at the hands of the Creeks as a result of years of trade abuses.⁶⁴ Peace secured, the Musgroves enjoyed several years of prosperity as traders until they set up a home and trading store near Yamacraw Bluff, which became the new town of Savannah in 1733. The land, worked by her slaves, was secured through her relations to the Yamacraw chief Tomochichi. She quickly became the spokesperson and an interpreter for General Oglethorpe who was to oversee the establishment of Savannah. In the meantime, Mary and John accumulated more land, slaves and goods, despite heavy trading losses and substantial debt. In 1735 her husband died. Although immensely wealthy in her own right, as a woman and wife she was unable to hold land under the laws the Georgia trustees had established, and with the death of her sons she was in danger of losing the hard-won land she had secured. In a deft move, she married a white interpreter Jacob Matthews, allowing him to inherit the Musgrove land.

Mary's story has been told many times. Most notable in the relationship was the fact that Jacob was not only the means to secure her land, he was her very own indentured servant. Despite his legal control of goods and property, his prior status as her social inferior (both in Creek and colonial terms) meant that she retained not only her access to influential goods, but her control over *him*. Jacob was therefore not just a means to an end, she required a malleable husband, too. If he stepped out of line her relatives quickly whipped him back. William Stephens, Georgia Trustee Secretary, said in his journal,

⁶³ Waselkov, *A Conquering Spirit*, p36

⁶⁴ Gretchen M. Bataille (ed), *Native American Women, A Biographical Dictionary* (New York, London: Garland Publishing, 1993), Mary Musgrove, p180-181.

When in his drunken Frolicks, he has sometimes attempted any Sort of Authority or Command, over such as came occasionally that Way from the Nation, he seldom has failed of a good Thrashing from them, to convince him of his Error: For though they shew some Regard to Mary (as they call his Wife) they shew none to him.⁶⁵

Mary undoubtedly held the upper hand in the relationship, and it was by design. In 1740, two years before his death, Jacob bequeathed all goods back to Mary.⁶⁶ In 1746 Mary then married the Reverend Bosomworth. The Colonial Records recount a somewhat weak man easily led by his stronger willed wife, who had wielded authority as Oglethorpe's right-hand woman and had a degree of control over the Creek warriors, too. On occasions, Bosomworth had found himself apologising for "the conduct of his wife...her unguarded expressions and rash design." He added that he "hoped her good behaviour...would atone for her past offences."⁶⁷ Mary's 'offences' had, among other things, amounted to rebuking the president of the council in Savannah for conducting affairs with the Creeks without her consent. She had been "drunk with liquor and disappointed in her views, came rushing in among them like a fury, and told the president that these were her people, that he had no business with them, and he should soon be convinced of it to his cost." On other occasions she had issued strong reprimands to the Creeks when she did not agree with their actions.

Mary Musgrove offers a valuable contribution in helping to understand the appeal of white men as husband material. Despite several claims regarding the docility and submissive nature of Indian women, the examples shown by the Dark Lanthorn and her compatriots indicate that these women may have viewed white men in identical ways. Not only were the men useful in their material ties but the language of patriarchy allowed white paternalism and gender protocols to be interpreted as passivity. White men often bestowed status on their wives through marriage as an extension of their enhanced social condition. With this came the obligation to protect and defer to wives in certain womanly matters. From his perspective, material beneficence fell within his responsibilities with no apparent gender conflict – the goods came as part of his status, and chivalry was attached to the concept of shared marital goals. From an Indian woman's view, however, men did not necessarily bestow status through marriage. Often the reverse was the case but even if

⁶⁵ Allen Candler, William Stephens in *Colonial Records of the State of Georgia Vol 6* (Atlanta: The Franklin Printing and Publishing Company, 1906), p519

⁶⁶ Ben Marsh, 'The Very Sinews of a New Colony' in Nora E. Jaffray (ed), *Gender, race and Religion in the Colonization of the Americas* (Hampshire 2007), p48

⁶⁷ *Colonial Records of South Carolina, 1750-1754*, p206-213, 305; George White, *Historical Collections of Georgia*, (New York 1855) p21-26.

status came as part of the union, it did not come with terms of submission. But a husband always bestowed goods. In other words, goods and status were separate entities. The caring paternalism of men that assumed female submission to husbands was most likely viewed as malleability and deference by Indian women. After all, with no concept of male superiority it was virtually impossible for women to have interpreted such behaviour in any other way. Such an explanation offers a possible framework for understanding the seemingly mercenary nature of women in marital transactions whilst explaining the appeal of white men, despite frequent sexual depredations in the borderlands.⁶⁸ The men's apparent deference to wives further confirmed their pliability, even decades later. James Germany, a notable trader of Coolome, was also married to a Creek woman. Despite her "worthy character and disposition" she did not share her husband's view that their children should be sent to be educated in Savannah or Charleston. Germany could not "prevail on his wife to consent to it: this affair affects him very sensibly, for he has accumulated a pretty fortune by his industry," recounted William Bartram.⁶⁹ The clear separation of sexual and gender submission from material gain, often entwined in Euro-American marriages, enhanced the appeal of white men. What Hawkins referred to as stubborn "mule-like tempers" of Creek women appeared to be the behaviour of women who had no concept of deference to men, simply because they were men. In matters of the Creeks, women knew better than white men.

John Lawson provides a slightly different picture of serial marriages, stating that wives were traded by men as "horses in a fair."⁷⁰ He characterised the 'trading' in monetary terms, describing the debts one man would assume in order to purchase the wife. "A man can change as often as he pleases, but likewise to have as many Wives as he is able to maintain," he asserted. Further establishing the women's essential passivity, he displayed puzzlement that older men would have more than one young one wife "because to me they seem'd incapacitated to make good Use of one of them." Lawson's patriarchal view of the marriages assumed that the women were both purchased and sexually subordinate. Lawson also believed that the debts of a widow's husband were assumed by her new husband. If a man managed to spend a night with a widow and was unable to pay her husband's debts

⁶⁸ I suggest that violent Indian masculinity and sexualised attacks were not related to attempts at gender domination. I also offer that white men's sexual attacks on Indian women were viewed as separate aspects of masculinity from general male behaviour. In other words, sex attacks were seen as part of warfare and not evidence of general masculine superiority, even if white men viewed their actions in this way. This allowed women to separate the character displayed by white men during frontier attacks from the actual men they married: it did not fall within the masculinity spectrum.

⁶⁹ Bartram, *On The Southeastern Indians*, p102.

⁷⁰ Lawson, *A New Voyage*, p187.

(their night together making him her husband) then he could “if he will, take her for his Money, or sell her to another for his wife.” In this sense, conjugal exchange resulted in ‘ownership’ of the woman’s body as a saleable commodity for the benefit of her husband.

Almost none of this makes sense when considered alongside other evidence. Especially by Lawson’s own admittance that women owned their own bodies, according to Indian custom.⁷¹ Essentially, to become a husband he had to produce some evidence of owning worldly goods. Upon marriage, she owned his goods and was under no obligation to pay any of his debts. Therefore, the ‘sale’ of her by her husband is curious – under Indian custom he simply had no authorisation to do so. A simpler explanation is that the woman bargained for an improved husband, possibly through sex, hence the ‘sale’ of her body. It was *she*, and not her husband, who ‘sold’ herself to another. Just like Lawson’s hapless friend, she simply married another man through bargaining and sexual exchange until the preferred mate was found: “Either of them has Liberty to leave the other, upon any frivolous Excuse they can make,” adds Lawson.⁷² In this case, it makes more sense when one views serial marriage from the woman’s perspective. Lawson’s account, hamstrung by Euro-American patriarchal perspectives and all its ensuing convolutions, complicated what was essentially a simple process. Women moved from one advantageous marriage to another, with the full endorsement of tribal custom, exchanging conjugal rights for material goods. It is also interesting to note the complete separation of male and female accountability here. The husband’s debt never became the wife’s responsibility upon his death because debt was not a joint affair or part of marriage. Instead, it was a masculine responsibility only.

Lawson assumed that debts were payable to some other being and was quite clear that creditors would call on the new husband to pay up for the previous deceased husband. This was very possible, after all, fur trade debt had caused considerable problems in the Southeast in this period.⁷³ So what on earth would make a man wish to assume the financial burden of another? Were all the women so devastatingly appealing? Or was there another explanation? “Whosoever takes her to Wife, pays all her Husband’s Obligations”, claimed Lawson. As the keeper of material goods, the food producers and bestowers of matrilineal connections, Creek women offered many attractions for men. The ‘debt’ may have been payment to the women, as all men were obliged to demonstrate their ability to

⁷¹ Lawson, *A New Voyage*, p187.

⁷² Lawson, *A New Voyage*, p186.

⁷³ Kathryn Holland Braund offers a comprehensive overview of fur trade economics in *Deerskins and Duffels, The Creek Indian Trade with Anglo-America, 1685-1815* (Nebraska 1993).

provide for their wives before marriage. It would seem equally likely that the new husband was being asked to display the equivalent generosity of her previous husband – to be unable to match another man’s marital contribution would surely have been humiliating. For a woman, to marry a man with fewer procurement skills was unattractive, and perhaps the debt payment was really the man’s dowry. Interestingly, the trail of debt responsibility was defined *only* by the man’s relation to the woman. In short, it was through interaction with the woman that material issues became active, even as she bore no responsibility for them.⁷⁴

This debt-free female custom was to further enhance women’s choices and status. As men became increasingly burdened by fur trade debt, gambling and alcohol consumption, women remained free of these concerns until far later in the century. Indian men, whose options to demonstrate manly skills became strangled, found that women sometimes opted for more consistent providers – namely, white men. Indian men had little reason to move from marriage to marriage: they had polygamy, should they require it, and the good names of their wives to enhance their tribal positions. Women, however, had many reasons to move from one man to another. Therefore it seems more plausible that women determined the nature of marriage and the exchange of their person for improved situations, rather than the cattle-market wife sale depicted by Lawson. Lawson’s “wife sale” casts an unpleasant patriarchal shadow on an activity that may well have been shaped by women, disguising its true purposes as an event for male benefit. The language is similar to that which described ‘wife-lending’ among other Indian groups such as the Cree.⁷⁵ It is possible that Lawson’s perspective completely failed to see the real evidence before him: that the “wife sale”, was just as likely to be a husband exchange. If so, serial marriages were not only a part of Carolina marital custom, but were primarily designed to enhance matrilineal fortunes and the women of the clans.

⁷⁴ Ben Marsh points out that Lawson’s experience of ‘wife-selling’ took place in a period where the capture of Indians for slaving was a distinct reality. This would almost certainly have impacted on ideas of ‘ownership’ of women in general terms, and would have presented challenges to anxious Indians regarding traditional female bodily autonomy. Communication.

⁷⁵ See Jennifer S. H. Brown, *Strangers in Blood, Fur Trade Family Companies in Indian Country* (Vancouver 1980), and Susan Sleeper Smith, *Indian Women and French Men: Rethinking Cultural Encounters in the Western Great Lakes* (Massachusetts 2001) for studies on north western fur trade marriages.

War husbands

Marriage to white men has often appeared to be the easier option for many women. In the Southeast, at least, pressure on land resources reduced hunting and the ability of Indian men to procure the necessary food for marriage, and to also reduce their debts. White men, as the source of many desirable goods, would have been the obvious short cut – after all, a woman's status within her community was unlikely to be affected by her association with white men. However, during warfare, sexual associations assumed a different complexion. On several occasions, women found themselves with husbands who were essentially enemies of the tribe, and accounts describe the women's efforts to warn husbands of impending Indian attacks.⁷⁶ During the Cherokee Wars of 1760, in a diary written from Fort Price George, Lieutenant Richard Cotymore described the efforts of women who had assisted a group of enemy white men, saying, "they were all desired by some Indian Women to make their escape... that they (the women) were well informed that, that night or early in the next morning they Estatoe and other Townspeople up the River were determined to come in a Body to kill the whites, first at Keowee, the at Mr Elliots and then to try what they could do at the Fort."⁷⁷ Later in the same conflict, a Mr Lucas had also been protected by "his woman, who kept him there till a proper time should offer for him to escape."⁷⁸ The fort, which held Cherokee chiefs as hostages, was under siege, its inhabitants "shut up (like birds in a cage)". The following month, Cotymore was killed. Before then, however, two Indian women were dispatched with a letter to take to Fort Loudon. Cotymore said,

Whether this will reach you or not is impossible to say. The Bearers of this are two Women that belong to the Fort, & have been before of great service, they are threatened as much as us, but offered their service to me to carry this.⁷⁹

How does one explain how women continued to enjoy community status, despite threats, whilst simultaneously undermining tribal intention? Indian men would certainly have found this situation frustrating, especially if issues larger than a marriage were at stake. With little evidence of Indian male responses to these women, it has been assumed that the women's behaviour was viewed as little more than an annoyance, sometimes treasonous. One historian has also suggested that the women's actions were appropriate, as a woman

⁷⁶ Adair, *History*, p262, 247.

⁷⁷ Richard Cotymore Diary, Cot. Demere papers, PRO, war office, 34/35, Jan 17th, 1760

⁷⁸ Richard Cotymore Diary, Cot. Demere papers, PRO, war office, 34/35, Jan 23rd January, 1760.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

had responsibility towards her husband, white or Indian.⁸⁰ In other words, her actions were viewed as gendered and female simply because they are considered within the sphere of marriage. However, the evidence overwhelmingly suggests that women not only often viewed their marriages as temporary, but as something that fulfilled their female status and tribal needs. In addition, there is not a great deal of evidence that indicates such levels of romantic devotion and self-sacrifice by women for the benefit of white men. Quite the opposite, in fact. The Indian woman's role was not to subsume her own needs to help realise her husband's greater purpose. Furthermore, in the Southeast in particular, women's views of the community extended far beyond marriage and the town boundaries. The very clear separation of male and female religious and spiritual statuses allowed women to see their world in a particular aspect that did not always match those of her male compatriots.

Therefore, the scholarship that attempts to explain the women's choice to warn white husbands of Indian attacks severely limits the opportunities for interpretation. I suggest that the women's actions be considered with a much broader lens in keeping with their own tribal perspectives. When Nanyehi, or Nancy Ward, famously launched into battle after her husband was killed, her actions were viewed as that of a *wife*, her greatness fuelled by feminine emotion and spousal devotion.⁸¹ The story is heroic but it also serves the earlier assertion, that men provided other opportunities for female status. To cast a shadow over the romance, Ward's mother was the sister of Attakullakulla – he became chief through virtue of the matriline of his sister and own mother. As his niece, Ward was also of high status. Furthermore, Cherokee women engaged in physical combat in warfare on many occasions – not just as devoted helpmates to husbands. One account describes the capture of two prisoners by the Cherokees during the Seven Year's War, one of whom was a woman who had been to war a total of 12 times.⁸² The attention to Ward's actions as a *wife* overlooks her actions as a woman operating as a tribal member in warfare. In this case, Ward was married to an Indian, making her war choices more straightforward to understand, but as a high status woman, her rallying call to the troops may have been motivated as much by her tribal obligations, as by her spousal loss. It would certainly have been appropriate to her status as the chief's niece.

⁸⁰ Theda Perdue discusses this issue regarding Cherokee women: *Cherokee Women*, p100-102. Perdue also refers to the Cherokee respect for autonomy and the frustration of Cherokee chiefs.

⁸¹ Bataille, *Dictionary of Biography*, p272.

⁸² A. Loudon, *Loudon's Indian Narratives, A Selection of Some of the Most interesting Narratives of Outrages Committed by the Indians* (Whitehall 1811), p179. The captive was possibly Delaware, but most likely Shawnee or Miami.

If we ignore any concept of wifely devotion, what other reason could there have been for a woman to place herself in such a precarious position, caught between tribal ambitions and white aspirations? The analyses regarding female warnings to white men have been limited. Because not only did Indian wives warn white men of impending danger, but unrelated women also attempted to prevent the killing of white men. Adair said,

It is surprising how those hardy men evaded the dangers they were surrounded with, especially at the beginning, and with so little loss. One of them told me, that while a party of the savages were on a corn-house scaffold, painting themselves red and black, to give the cowardly blow to him and his companions, an old woman overheard them concerting their bloody design, and speedily informed him of the threatening danger: she mentioned the intended place of meeting to his friends, and they immediately set off, one this way, and another that, to prevent a pursuit, and all met safe, to the great regret of the Christian French and their red hirelings.⁸³

The matter appears confusing because historically the role of wife and woman have been separated in Euro-American literatures. However, the latter examples show that the actions of women acting as wives (or women who “belong” to the fort) fall within the spectrum of Indian women who act with tribal authority in a general sense. Although female authority is examined in a separate chapter, it is quite relevant here: women did not abandon their matrilineal responsibilities simply because they married white men, and the marriage did not necessarily become her principal focus. If anything, a marriage facilitated a better route into diplomacy where her husband (or close other male) became a potential conduit for her diplomatic aspirations. In that case it is more useful to view Indian women’s war actions not as loyal wives but as *women* with bigger concerns. Mary Musgrove provides a perfect example of this through her three husbands, all of whom served various needs that allowed her to eclipse their status, as did the powerful Sophia Durant. Accounts show her to be equally assertive in both large-scale and mundane matters.⁸⁴

Historically women’s concerns were believed to be focused on the ‘domestic sphere’ where Indian men were featured most in the public arena.⁸⁵ This is a fallacy and unfit for purpose when discussing Indian women. It is more appropriate to view the separation of

⁸³ Adair, *History*, p264.

⁸⁴ Hawkins, *The Collected Works*, p43, 44, 127, 130.

⁸⁵ Axtell, *The Indian Peoples*, p85.

Indian female and male intentions as being long-term versus short-term gain. Not all Indian men were not all concerned with the public arena, but *were* concerned with short-term gains in warfare: the killing of enemies, trophies, scalps, retribution and glory. Numerous accounts describe the impetuous nature of young warriors and the trouble many tribal elders had controlling them.⁸⁶ The general response to angry colonial officials was a shrug: young warriors were expected to engage in low-level agitation with enemies to achieve glory.

The actions show an excess of behaviour that focused on retribution rather than a bigger purpose, such as reclaiming land – what Adair referred to as the “vindictive disposition of Indians” that “impetuously forces them on in quest of equal revenge for blood, without the least thought of consequences”.⁸⁷ Adair then provided more intriguing details about the trapped men of Fort George, illustrating some of the reasons behind the extreme hostility toward the garrison. The soldiers had repeatedly raped Indian women whose husbands were at the hunt, and had treated visiting Indians to the fort in a “haughty overbearing spirit”. Unlike the wise French who often formed good relations with local Indian groups, the Fort George troops had destroyed any chance of appealing to male Indian mercy. As Adair colourfully described it:

When the Indians find no redress of grievances, they never fail to redress themselves, either sooner or later. But when they begin, they do not know where to end. Their thirst for the blood of their reputed enemies, is not to be quenched with a few drops. The more they drink, the more it inflames their thirst. When they dip their finger in human blood, they are restless till they plunge themselves in it.⁸⁸

It is easy to see the root of the warriors’ anger and the customs that demanded bloody retribution. However, it seems to sit in direct contrast to the mercy dash of the women of the fort. Were the rapist soldiers also within the fort at the same time? The women’s actions, then, could be framed as pacifist, forgiving and generous. Cotymore expressed concern at their safety and commended their actions. He was well aware of the dangers they faced from their *own* men. But the picture becomes a little bit cloudy at this point. Women performed acts such as this frequently, assisting white men / enemies in danger, but there are few reports as to whether they suffered censure. However, this evidence

⁸⁶ Adair, *History*, p247.

⁸⁷ Adair, *History*, p245.

⁸⁸ Adair, *History*, p246.

indicates that women were held accountable for these actions. This was an act of war.

For many observers, women were the harbingers of peace, the calm voice amongst angry males clamouring for violence, such as Sophia Durant's talk to the Creek warriors. During Colonel George Chicken's trip to the Cherokees in 1725, he held a meeting with a Cherokee woman who had led a peace delegation to the Creeks, and had been authorised to speak on behalf of the chief.⁸⁹ The Mi'kmaq also fostered peace through marriage, where women acted as political ambassadors bridging cultural barriers and forging long-term alliances.⁹⁰ However, for every peace-seeking female voice there were other, contrary voices. Mary Musgrove threatened her own Creek warriors almost as often as she threatened white settlers with the ire of those same warriors. Women raised war parties as often as they sought to halt wars, and Nancy Ward both tortured prisoners and displayed compassion in equal measure.⁹¹ Women offered counsel and advice, their opinions equally respected. For example, the famous Shawnee Indian leader, Tecumseh, was greatly influenced by his sister Tecumpease.⁹² Women were not necessarily nurturing or peaceable or gentle, and did not subscribe to a single set of gendered feminine characteristics that made it easy to categorise or comprehend their behaviour. The most logical conclusion, then, is that women acted entirely as they saw fit for the particular circumstances. It is also very clear that they believed that conflict resolution could be achieved in different ways to Indian men, seeking continuity of clan, lineage and Indian heritage. Cotymore's diary displayed several key points. The first is that the women did not agree with the aggressive methods of Indian men. Second, they sought to actively undermine Indian male aspirations. The third is that they not only displayed agency, they were *proactive* – they offered to convey the letter for assistance from Fort Loudon. Not only that, they were successful in their endeavours. If women preferred the new, emerging American landscape it was because it offered a better alternative to the present. It is also clear that women had different ideas to Indian men when it came to the concept of 'enemy'.

Women in the Southeast did not appear to be routinely submissive to males, and although having a white husband could cause conflict, they were easy enough to abandon if it became necessary. However, enemy husbands and partners were not always external to the tribe, such as fort partners or husbands. For example, Mary Musgrove's first marriage

⁸⁹ Colonel Chicken's Journal to the Cherokees, 1725, in *Travels*, p135.

⁹⁰ Maillard, *An Account of the Customs and manners of the Micmakis*, p23.

⁹¹ Pickett, *History of Alabama*, p241.

⁹² R. David Edmund, *The Shawnee Prophet* (University of Nebraska Press 1985), p29-30. Tecumseh and Tecumpease differed over the direction of the Nativist movement, however.

served to cement Indian-white relations, where the marriage could offset violence. He became a Creek, even if he did not realise it. Although often viewed in similar terms to a general Euro-American diplomatic union, in actual fact, marrying an enemy became part of the 'transformative' powers that Indian women held, taking someone and recreating them as Indian or friend. This happened even in intensely violent situations. Naturalist and explorer, Le Page Du Pratz, described the torture suffered by captives at the hands of the Natchez in the mid eighteenth century. For luckier men, "Sometimes it happens that a young woman who has lost her husband in the war, asks the prisoner to supply the room of the deceased, and her request is immediately granted," he said.⁹³ *The Jesuit Relations* also describes women who chose new husbands to replace their deceased spouses. If this arrangement failed to please, the man was then tortured and probably killed.⁹⁴

It is unlikely that a white man in this situation would have felt married. The inversion of gender stereotypes was too acute. The male, stripped naked and physically subdued, presented an intensely vulnerable and physically weak person to the woman who was operating within an environment that supported and endorsed her gendered authority over the captive. It permitted female violence and dominance over male, and upset concepts of the extent of physical power. In this case, any male physical power over female was circumvented by tribal custom that actively sought to remove *all* traces of power and identity from the male. The captive had little choice but to submit – his masculine agency subsumed within the wider tribal concerns and subject to female will. Overall, an emasculating experience for any man. In these cases, the war husband offered different potential and purpose for the women who married other white men.

For others, marriage required verbal consent, even if it was heavily coerced. A Mrs Bard, who had been captured by Indians in 1758 by Delawares, had managed to escape her captors and had met another white woman who had an Indian husband and child. To Mrs Bard's horror, the woman had been tied to a stake and forced to consent to marriage.⁹⁵ Interestingly, her consent was only valid when spoken in the Indian tongue. A young Joseph Gilbert was also an adopted captive but found life difficult among the Indians. They had suggested he marry an Indian woman in order to achieve acceptance and success but he refused and was treated very poorly as a result. The boy was lame and unable to provide

⁹³ M. Le Page Du Pratz, *The History of Louisiana, or of the Western Parts of Virginia and Carolina* (London 1774), p355.

⁹⁴ R. G. Thwaites, (ed), *The Jesuit Relations and Allied Documents* (Cleveland 1896), P177; N. Knowles, 'The Torture of Captives by the Indians of Eastern North America', *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society*, Vol. 82, No. 2 (March 1940), p186.

⁹⁵ Loudon, *Loudon's Indian Narratives*, p52.

his own food efficiently. Marriage would have allowed him access to family produce and reduced his burden. However, to his eyes it may have appeared that his wife was providing for his needs rather than the reverse, which would have been customary among white settlers.⁹⁶ This author has yet to come across much literature that examines how long these adopted / war husbands remained married. Therefore it is hard to analyse the nature of a marriage forged in aggression and coercion. However, it is most likely that they behaved as Joseph Gilbert did, and sought escape at the earliest opportunity. The woman who had given birth to the child of her Indian husband had fewer options if she was to remain with her infant.

Du Pratz was also offered an opportunity to join the Indian nation in a more agreeable manner. He described a meeting with a woman – a chief's wife – and her teenage daughter.

After some compliments to me, and commendations of our customs and manners, she condemned the barbarous usages that prevailed among themselves, and ended with proposing me as a husband for her daughter, that I might have it in my power to civilize their nation by abolishing their inhuman customs, and introducing those of the French. As I foresaw the danger of such an alliance, which would be opposed by the whole nation of the Natchez, and at the same time was sensible that the resentment of a slighted woman is very formidable, I returned her such an answer as might shew my great respect for her daughter, and prevent her from making the same application to some brainless Frenchman, who, by accepting the offer, might expose the French settlement to some disastrous event.⁹⁷

Du Pratz was correct to show caution, of course, but his dismissal of the woman's reasoning glosses over the ambitions that many women displayed when they encountered white men. She envisaged change taking place over the longer term with strong, enduring roots in family and kinship. Establishing these roots made it extremely difficult for future philanthropists and modernisers to erase custom, as Americans were to discover at the end of the eighteenth century. The female approach sits at odds with the explosive, traumatic change gained from warfare and violence. Indian land, villages, fields, homes and goods could be destroyed in a moment, but custom and tradition were far less tangible and harder to grasp – and therefore harder to destroy. The Natchez woman was also proactive in

⁹⁶ Loudon, *Loudon's Indian Narratives*, p100-103.

⁹⁷ A short time after this incident, the Natchez wiped out the French settlers and soldiers at Fort Rosalie after a period of increased tensions. The lives of the women, including slaves, were spared. Le Page Du Pratz, *History of Louisiana*, p330, 82-85.

suggesting suitable partnerships for white men, and the account resonates very strongly with Benjamin Hawkins' encounter with the matron decades later. Du Pratz avoided the marriage proposal by claiming that his "spiritual" laws forbade him to marry women who did not pray. The daughter it seemed, "was far from being satisfied" with the outcome.

Diplomatic marriages could be as simple as Du Pratz's offer, or more elaborate affairs. But the long-term goal remained consistent and 'transformation' from enemy to friend was key. For other Indian groups, the relationship with white men and how to incorporate them into Indian worlds was more complicated. Through successive colonial endeavours, the Mi'kmaq of Nova Scotia had witnessed their land pass back and forth between the French and the British. Where the French had successfully cultivated long-term, entrenched relationships with the Mi'kmaq the British had met nothing but failure in their attempts to control the violently defensive Mi'kmaq. For Mi'kmaq women, incorporation of whites was quite specific and was sometimes determined by nationality. This contrasts with the Southeastern women who were willing to entertain marriage to French, German, Scottish, English, Spanish or Irish. The wide geographic coverage of the Southeastern Indian nations permitted women a greater exposure to many different peoples. In contrast the Mi'kmaq had fewer varieties of visitors and colonists, and certainly fewer in number. However, this only appeared to magnify differences. British colonial officials had struggled to manage relations with the Mi'kmaq. Alternately approving of mixed race marriages then actively discouraging them sent only mixed messages to an already inflamed Indian nation.⁹⁸ Despite gaining control of the colony, the Mi'kmaq actively rejected any form of British authority and by the mid-eighteenth century, an 'incorporated' British man was a dead man, most likely tortured, dismembered and cannibalised. Following a similar policy to adoption of relatives, the Mi'kmaq *did* take British men and women as captives occasionally but did not adopt them as replacement spouses or family members. Full-scale executions were preferable, where children, women and men were slain and scalped.⁹⁹ "There is nothing they do not think permitted against their enemy," said one Jesuit missionary.¹⁰⁰

Part of the outright rejection of British men stemmed from the soldiers' treatment of Indian women, even in times of peace. In one particularly unpleasant event, a group of soldiers

⁹⁸ Maillard, *An Account of the Customs and Manners of the Micmakis*, p32.

⁹⁹ John Wilson, late inspector of the stores, *Address'd to the merchants of London. A genuine narrative of the transactions in Nova Scotia, since the settlement, June 1749 till august the 5th, 1751* (London, 1751).

¹⁰⁰ Maillard, *An Account of the Customs and manners of the Micmakis*, 1758, p18-19.

found five Mi'kmaq women and three children in a remote hut. All were killed. Two of the women were heavily pregnant and had been disembowelled. The French Abbé Maillard, who spent decades among the Mi'kmaq, added that the Indians “have always looked on this deed as a singular mark of the most unheard-of cruelty.” In such a localised area, atrocities were felt keenly and not quickly forgotten.¹⁰¹ However, the French had successfully intermarried for generations with the Mi'kmaq. The pattern of patrilocality made it simpler for Indian women to leave the paternal household to move in with their husbands. At the same time, many of those new French husbands also lived within the area of the Indians. The Abbé Le Loutre reported to Maillard in 1738 that, “The Indians were a heavy burden to me yet they have added some French families to my mission,” suggesting strong local ties and extended kinship bonds beyond the white patriarchal household. It indicated a willingness to interact freely and on an equal footing with their Indian hosts. After all, the Indian lifestyle “...has such charms for some of our native French, and even for some of them who have been delicately bred, that, when once that have betaken themselves to it young, there is hardly any reclaiming them from it, or inducing them to return to a more civilised life.”¹⁰²

The British based their lack of good relations with the Mi'kmaq on the French, rather than atrocities, scalp bounties and broken treaty promises. To British minds, the attachment to the French and dislike of the British was not a Mi'kmaq preference, but due solely to French interference and agitation. And unlike the Southeast, it was virtually impossible to play the Mi'kmaq off against the French. In a letter to the Board of Trade in 1753, Governor Peregrine Hopson said,

...the almost continual wax we have with the Indians prevents our mixing English settlers with these inhabitants... they have been hitherto left open to the insinuations and evil practices of the French priests and other Emissarys...¹⁰³

Instead, it was anticipated that British soldiers would marry into the French population. Governor Shirley wrote in 1748, “Soldiers are inlisted for a short term with a promise of 50 acres for a single man and 100 for a married one, upon the admission which wants to be an encouragement to ‘em not only to enlist but to marry probably with the French

¹⁰¹ Maillard, *An Account of the Customs and manners of the Micmakis*, 1758, p62-63.

¹⁰² Letter from Mons. De La Varenne to his friend at Rochelle, Louisbourg, the 8th of May, 1756, in Maillard, *An Account of the Customs and manners of the Micmakis*.

¹⁰³ Hopson to BoT, 23 July, 1753, Governor's letter books, NSARM RG1 Vol. 38-43/15233.

inhabitants which would have a farther good effect.”¹⁰⁴ The religious denomination of the bride, or its attendant obstacles, did not appear to cross his mind. And again, the British failed to impress in any significant sense. It is true that British men would almost certainly have been left on the shelf, shunned in favour of French and Acadian males. However, there were no such restrictions when it came to the Irish, or even other deserters. There are not very many accounts of British deserters marrying Indian women and they appear to have been handed over to French authorities, with a few exceptions. For example, one Royal Navy deserter had fallen in love with an Indian woman and had smuggled himself into Mi'kmaq territory with the assistance of her brothers, dressed as an Indian.¹⁰⁵ However, the Irish held a certain appeal. Despite some historiography that suggests Irish emigrants tended to marry within their own groups, several Irishmen appear in the Nova Scotia archives as husbands of Indian women, such as the Murphys and Knowlens. The appeal lay partly in their religion and their fondness for desertion. As frustrated and disillusioned males, they were more receptive to native peoples, and were most likely to be accepted by Indian groups as a source of information on the enemy.¹⁰⁶ Since marriage was used in a variety of political ways, and given the intense dislike of the British occupation in NS, it is very likely women would have sought information via romantic relations to help protect the tribe. And just to be sure, a Catholic screening process was in place that allowed males to demonstrate their religious credentials, either through language (French) or blessing oneself correctly.¹⁰⁷ A shipwrecked sailor detailed described an encounter between his Irish manservant and their Mi'kmaq rescuers in 1781. He claims the Mi'kmaq were devoted to their faith, day and night, and sourly recounts that he was disturbed by his manservant “roaring” hymns and reciting Latin verses with the Mi'kmaq all night: “being an Irish Catholic, they were exceedingly fond of him and heaped their favours upon him very profusely”.¹⁰⁸ To add insult to injury, the Mi'kmaq matrons made him pay heavily for his recuperation.

Trying to establish the extent of female agency in marriage is difficult as there are few sources that record direct speech of women (outside of war speeches). However, women were not powerless in marriage choices, and men did not simply marry the woman of their

¹⁰⁴ Governor Shirley to the Board of Trade, 3rd March, 1748, Vol.29 Feb 1748-March 1755 - NSARM RG1 Vol. 29-34/15229.

¹⁰⁵ Whitehead, *The Old Man Told Us*, p120.

¹⁰⁶ A. J. B. Johnston, *Endgame 1758, The Promise of Glory and the Despair of Louisbourg's Last Decade* (Nova Scotia 2007, p94.

¹⁰⁷ A. Casteel *Anthony Casteel's Journal*, (1753), Public Archives of Nova Scotia, Halifax, RG1, no. 23.

¹⁰⁸ S. W. Prenties, Ensign of the 84th Regiment of Foot, *Narrative of a Shipwreck on the Island of Cape Breton in a Voyage from Quebec 1780*, (London 1782), p54.

choice. In fact, a long courtship generally curtailed any impulses while women debated with men over the merits of the marriage.¹⁰⁹ Prenties' account, though, does indicate that religious devotion was a worthwhile trait in a suitable mate outside of the Indian nation. It signalled a unity of purpose and the extent that religion played in forging bonds, and made for a successful engagement. As far as marriage was concerned, religion beat nationality. This was almost absent from marriages in the Southeast, and a religious countenance was not a requirement for Creek and Cherokee brides, even if their husbands occasionally sought to 'save' them with Christianity.

Political marriage

For Southeastern and middle colony women, many marriages were political in nature and scope. Like Mary Musgrove, Molly Brant shrewdly utilised her marriage to William Johnson while lending him a great deal of her own political clout. For the Mi'kmaq, a political marriage could be powerful and lasting and its rejection could lead to war. The difference in the approaches to marriage between the Creek woman and the Mi'kmaq women represents the divergence of Indian custom across the eastern seaboard, between Indian and white preferences for how best to frame the new relationships in the coming decades. From Nova Scotia to the Southeast, colonial authorities worked hard to create Indian nations that were compatible with white customs – and also with the new white compassionate care towards their 'defeated' and less fortunate Indian charges.¹¹⁰ Although the Mi'kmaq were generally distrustful of treaties, they did indicate some desire for accord.

In 1757, two Indians approached Captain John Knox at Mayass (Maillard's) Hill garrison appealing for a truce. They declared themselves "friends to the English" and requested to be considered neutrals if the British did not see fit to choose them as allies. To prove their sincerity in burying the hatchet they volunteered themselves as hostages and were later taken to the Halifax citadel.¹¹¹ The Indians were sister and brother Clare and Anselm Thomas, children of a Mi'kmaq woman and a British deserter, sent to treat on behalf of their father.¹¹² The choice of Clare as a delegate was notable. Other accounts describe only Mi'kmaq males as approaching the British for treaties, and as a non-combatant, her role did not appear to be a display of strength, truculence or challenge. Had her brother taken

¹⁰⁹ Maillard, *An Account of the Customs and Manners of the Micmakis and Maricheets*, p55.

¹¹⁰ Sharon J. Ingall, *Distorted Images: Attitudes Toward the Micmac in Nova Scotia, 1788-1900* (1992) (unpublished), LAC, Ottawa.

¹¹¹ J. Knox, A.G. Doughty (ed), *The Journal of Captain John Knox: An Historical Journal of the Campaign in North America* (1914), pp89-90; Whitehead, *The Old Man Told Us*, p150.

¹¹² Whitehead, *The Old Man Told Us*, p146.

the lead in negotiations then perhaps she could have been viewed as having a secondary role, a less important person to be used as a hostage. However, when Knox visited them in the room they were appointed at the fort, Clare approached “eagerly” and saluted him, indicating an intent to open discussions and communicate with the captain. Knox and Clare had a shared knowledge of French but when he had difficulty deciphering her words, she signalled for a pen and paper and wrote fluently for him instead.¹¹³

Knox was taken with her physically. She wore distinctive jewellery, perhaps an indication of her status. She had “much of the French in her manner and behaviour”, he declared, and she was “comely” and “not disagreeable”. She had “sprightly black eyes, hair of the same colour”, she wasn’t as dark complexioned as the French and she possessed a “well-shaped nose”. In contrast, the brother was “neither so fair nor so tall”, “mean-looking” and approached Knox in a “dreadful skulking manner”. He did not have the “engaging openness of countenance of Clare”. Clare, it seems, had been well chosen indeed. Knox’s reaction to the couple is interesting. It was clear that a male-male interaction was always going to be problematic and tense, fraught with unspoken challenge. On the other hand, the female-male interaction was far more productive. Clare appealed to Knox’s British sense of manly propriety. With her evident attractiveness, language and literacy skills, she had been chosen as a Mi’kmaq ambassador to promote a union of peoples. Furthermore, no enquiries were made of the ‘hostages’ until the following year, and even then, Clare and Anselm remained at Halifax, the Mi’kmaq apparently happy for this arrangement to continue indefinitely.¹¹⁴

This account reveals a potentially interesting change of Mi’kmaq sentiment regarding the British. Approaching the fort under a flag of truce was a tacit acknowledgement of British territory and a recognition of their formalities. It appealed to the patriarchal sense of order and hierarchy, showed appropriate supplication to the Captain’s rank, and was perhaps the closest the Mi’kmaq came to finding common ground with their enemy. Clare was a perfect choice for initiating the peace process: in effect, she *was* the peace treaty in Mi’kmaq gendered terms, an attempt at Mi’kmaq diplomacy that has not historically been considered before. It is possible that the role of a female in this account has caused more traditional historical scholarship to overlook the potential significance of this act, believing instead that the previous (male-only) attempts at treaty and peace-making were the sole

¹¹³ Whitehead, *Old Man Told Us*, p. 120.

¹¹⁴ Knox, J. in A. G. Doughty, (ed), *The Journal of Captain John Knox: An Historical Journal of the Campaign in North America* (1914), p89-93.

avenues of diplomatic exchange. If this interpretation has any merit, however, then this could be viewed as a shift of policy for the Mi'kmaq. The length of time Clare remained at Halifax (before her death of small pox) indicated that the Mi'kmaq may have been hoping for a marriage, perhaps viewing her long hostage status as a potential engagement with the appropriate male chaperone (in much the same way the girl's father would have been present during a Mi'kmaq engagement). It would explain the rather cheerful, but dismissive, enquiry as to the siblings' welfare.¹¹⁵ If anyone could convince the British of their potential as a fruitful alliance, then the traditional male-female diplomatic approach, embodied in the educated and high-status Clare, may have worked: conciliatory rather than hostile, charming rather than challenging.

Clare's story deserves particular attention because it took place at a time of fragile relations after an extended period of conflict with one enemy. The act raised a significant white flag for the Mi'kmaq, held aloft by a seemingly accomplished young woman acting on behalf of her nation. However, she was not alone. Other Mi'kmaq women acted as peace-bringers. In 1757 a proposal by the Mi'kmaq was made for a political marriage to neighbouring Maliseet peoples to secure peace. A group of brides had been sent to make overtures but did not meet with the required success. One Mi'kmaq male commented,

There are now more than five, six, seven eight moons revolved since we left the principal amongst our daughters with them, in order thereby to form the most durable alliance with them...and yet we have seen them look on these girls of the most distinguished rank...as mere playthings for them.¹¹⁶

The Mi'kmaq man objected to the treatment of the women whilst plainly stating the purpose of their presence. In addition, their social rank was clearly stated, indicating a hierarchy of women that could match that of males, and impress sufficiently to form political unions. Given that these women had not been accompanied by a chaperone, the matter becomes even more intriguing: were they also assigned a political voice? The final chapter in this dissertation shows that this was almost certainly the case – women as speech-makers demonstrated that these “ambassador brides” were highly influential and superbly skilled in oratory. As vessels of tribal ambition and intent, their role was more than a peace offering – they were the embodiment of Mi'kmaq heart and power.

¹¹⁵ Knox, *The Journal of Captain John Knox*, p89-93.

¹¹⁶ Maillard, *An Account of the Customs and Manners of the Micmakis*, p23.

Political marriages took place further south that also had importance, such as Mary Musgrove's first marriage, which also fulfilled a political purpose. While it brought peace to the Creek territory, it did little to restrain or redirect her ambitious impulses. In fact, she utilised her contacts and pivotal role to create an established material world for herself that was designed to provide security, advance her status and further consolidate her position as leader of the Creeks.¹¹⁷ Under no illusions as to the importance of her role, the marriage provided a springboard to other important relations, and her husband faded into relative obscurity as she occupied a greater and greater proportion of the colonial records, amassing connections and trading rights. In fact, many of the women of the Southeast and middle colonies who appear in the records as significant actors had strong political connections, such as Mohawk Molly Brant, wife of Indian agent William Johnston. Her status not only assured Johnston's success but afforded her a pension from the British government. Also from a matrilineal background, she manoeuvred carefully in fragile times and it was quite evident that Johnston gained as much from his alliance with her, as she did from him. Sadly, powerful women such as these are frequently seen as the exception, their place in the records de facto evidence of their unique roles. However, these women performed customary roles, and for every woman whose name reached the ears of colonial officials, many others lived as significant agents within Indian worlds, marrying men who could advance the clan, town or nation.

Polygamy

A final version of marriage was polygamous, that is, one man with more than one wife. Many travellers' accounts describe both Indian and white men with several wives, or state that the custom was permitted even when not widely practised. In these descriptions, the man was universally considered to hold authority over his wives, with the women subjugated and 'owned', even if she was of equal social status to her husband.¹¹⁸ Listing the characteristics of a man who apparently had several wives, John Lawson described the oratory provided by a conjurer at a funeral for a deceased Indian male.

¹¹⁷ Bosomworth Papers, Deposition of Creek Indian chiefs 1747 re: Mary Musgrove land claims. Keith Read Manuscript Collection, Hargrett Rare Books and Manuscript Collection, UGA, MS 921

¹¹⁸ Winslow, *Relation or Journal of the Beginning and Proceedings of the English Plantation Settled at Plimoth in New England*, London 1622 (EEBO); Charlevoix, *Journal of a Voyage to North America*, 2 Vols, (London, 1761); D'Artiguiette, *Travels*, p48; Beauchamp, *Travels*, 294. Although some tribes practised polyandry, where one woman had more than one husband, polygamy was acceptable among the Creek and Mi'kmaq.

...he begins to give an Account, who the dead Person was, and how stout a Man he approv'd himself; how many Enemies and Captives he had kill'd and taken; how strong, tall, and nimble he was; that he was a great Hunter, a Lover of his Country, and possess'd of a great many beautiful Wives and Children, esteem'd the greatest of Blessings among these Savages, in which they have a true Notion. Thus this Orator runs on, highly extolling the dead Man, for his Valour, Conduct, Strength, Riches, and Good-Humour; and enumerating his Guns, Slaves and almost every thing he was possess'd of, when living.¹¹⁹

Of course, there may have been an element of exaggeration regarding this particular individual's life successes, but the elevated status afforded a man who had achieved such things is evident. Here, masculine aspirations are clear, indicating what a man with polygamous intentions potentially had to offer wives: war prowess, enemy engagement and a superb hunter. In this description Lawson also showed that, according to his interpretation, women were something to be 'possess'd' with the husband's ownership enhanced by the beauty of the wives. Bartram framed the polygamous marriages in terms of a royal union, declaring that "every man takes as many wives as he chooses, but the first is queen, and the other her handmaids and associates."¹²⁰ In reality, wives would have rejected or selected husbands based on what he had to offer her needs at the particular time. In addition, a man with such prowess would have sought a suitable marriage to match his achievements – her looks may have been irrelevant. Subsequent wives would also have been approved or rejected by the 'queen' and her approval may have depended less on physical appearance and more on utility.

Richard White demonstrated the rise and fall of polygamous customs among Native American nations, describing the preference or decline among various nations.¹²¹ Where decline could be attributed to the influence of Christian religious traditions on Indian people, its continued practice elsewhere suggests that areas relatively free from Christian penetration felt no moral pressure to alter their behaviour.¹²² It is possible that skewed gender ratios encouraged more women into polygamous marriages but others may have preferred it as a marriage choice.¹²³ Indeed, men with good hunting or procurement skills

¹¹⁹ Lawson, *A New Voyage*, p180.

¹²⁰ Bartram, *On The Southeastern Indians*, p128-9.

¹²¹ Richard White, *The Middle Ground: Indians, Empires, and Republics in the Great Lakes Region 1650-1815*, (Cambridge 1991), p66.

¹²² Bragdon, K., 'Gender as a Social Category in Native Southern New England', *Ethnohistory*, Vol. 43, No. 4, (Autumn 1996), p575.

¹²³ J. Axtell, *The Indian Peoples of Eastern America*, p79.

could expect to support more than one wife. This clearly signalled his excellent prowess as a man and provider *and* improving his status through marriage, especially sororal polygamy where the marriage included sisters, or mother and daughters, reinforcing connections to a particular clan or family.¹²⁴

The use of the word 'allowed' or 'permitted' when discussing polygamy carries with it many assumptions: that within the custom there lay potential for social disharmony or conflict, or that it required special circumstances to enact the 'right'. The privilege would seem to be for the benefit of males but some contemporary anthropology suggests that polygamy offered greater freedom for women.¹²⁵ If so, polygamous privilege was something that could be utilised to realise female aspirations, too. For some women, polygamy did not always provide the material gains promised but far from being passive recipients of the husband's economic fate, they could operate as a unit to force change within the marriage. An example was provided by Edmond Atkin, superintendent for Indian Affairs for the Southern Department who, in 1757, reported the situation of one friendly Indian, Aleck, mico of Cussitah:

In truth he was poor & unable to maintain his family in his own country, in the manner they had lived. His Wives therefore were often complaining, that they did not live so well there as they had done.¹²⁶

Aleck had requested 20 cows and calves or a stock of 40 head of cattle to start off his civilised life: not an inconsiderable demand. Although he may have sought advancement for his own ends, it appeared that not only was he unable to hunt to provide enough for his wives and children, but they had pressured him to change and adapt to respond to their needs and overcome of poverty.

For the group of wives, Aleck presents one of the most obvious points of departure for Creek and white masculine ideals. As a man with multiple wives he practised polygamy and had undoubtedly been successful in hunting or business: one simply could not afford to provide for several wives and children otherwise. However, his capitulation to his

¹²⁴ A. Irving Hallowell, The Incidence, Character, and Decline of Polygyny among the Lake Winnipeg Cree and Saulteaux, *American Anthropologist*, New Series, Vol. 40, No. 2. (Apr. - Jun., 1938), pp. 235-256.

¹²⁵ Theda Perdue, *Cherokee Women, Gender and Culture Change, 1700-1835*, (Nebraska 1998), p44, also Stone, *Kinship and Gender*.

¹²⁶ Edmond Atkin to Governor Henry Ellis, 25 January 1760, Henry Ellis Papers 1757-1760, MS942, Georgia Historical Society. Aleck's wives were Yuchi but matrilineal. J. R. Swanton, *The Indian Tribes of North America*, (Washington DC: Smithsonian Institution, 1952), p118.

wives' demands for cattle revealed how Indian women were a significant force in shaping their own fortunes by adopting practices such as cattle rearing. Their insistence on Aleck's economic advancement could certainly be viewed as traditional but on marrying a man of wealth, his wives would have expected him to maintain his wealth to honour marital commitments – and he was evidently disappointing in this department. Although his failings would not have lowered his wives' social status (their status derived from their clan, not the husband), it did present an inconvenience for women who had grown accustomed to, or had been promised, certain material standards.

The account does present a rather clichéd view of a group of nagging women and their hapless, henpecked husband, but their concern was that he provide materially for them. In this way they could continue to enhance their own status by dispensing goods to others. This was a fundamental responsibility of husbands and is a crucial distinction in comprehending the priorities and events that helped determine social and economic change at the hands of women. Where matrilineal men may have been responsible for the education and discipline of their sister's children, as husbands they were expected to honour *material* contributions to the wives' collective, matrilineal household. Finally, Aleck's situation also provides some insight into the rather weakened position of a male within a polygamous marriage, who was subject to collective pressure from his wives, and the ever-present but less obvious pressure from the community. As an ally of the British and a man of influence among the Lower Creeks, Aleck's wives were aware of the leverage they held and used it to full advantage, initially requesting land within the white towns but eventually remaining among the Creeks where they were more advantageous to the whites. It was also notable that his wives were united in their demands, and that Aleck and Atkins were the tools to realise their ambitions rather than obstacles. In this interesting case, the women provide the focus and impetus for change, using social customs and gendered pressures to force Euro-American practices on their husband. The blend of traditional femininities with modernising vision shows a fluid and flexible outlook on the changing colonial landscape, and contrasts with Aleck's restricted and weakened masculine position.

Aleck's wives indicate the roots of female ambition and the determination of women to take advantage of opportunities as they arose. At the same time, white men also took advantage of polygamous customs, despite general social and religious condemnation of

such acts.¹²⁷ For example, James Adair went so far as to liken sororal polygamy to an incestuous relationship.¹²⁸

Other white Southeastern traders felt differently. William McIntosh and Paddy Carr had three wives, William Weatherford and Lachlan McGillivray at least two.¹²⁹ James Germany had several Indian wives and children and George Galphin, an Irish trader, had accumulated wealth through his long-term connections with the Creeks. He subsequently held a great deal of influence among them, by the 1770s becoming “a merchant prince of the Georgia forest”.¹³⁰ Galphin clearly had the means to support his wives but they were not an enhancement to his status. Creek women controlled land use and with a Creek wife came a very valuable economic resource – an asset not lost on Galphin. Much of that land became populated by slaves, producing wealth and influence on a wide scale. One of those slaves apparently became his ‘mistress’. In fact, all of Galphin’s wives were classed as mistresses according to historian Amos J. Wright, even his two Creek wives Nitshukey and Metawney. Another was a mulatto woman named Sapho and a white woman named Rachel Dupee. Perhaps Wright refers to them as mistresses given that Galphin had a first wife in Ireland called Catherine Sanderson whom he had failed to divorce. Wright’s Eurocentric bias is evident but it also overlooked a crucial point. Despite western custom that would have awarded legitimacy to his first ‘true’ wife, Galphin had clearly disregarded his first wife as having *any* legitimacy on American soil: he had not seen her for 44 years and on his death in 1782 she received nothing from his estate. In addition, in his will he recognised the legitimacy of his own children by dispensing all his goods to them thus validating the marriages.¹³¹

Overall, various forms of polygamy were practiced in varying degrees by several Eastern seaboard Indian nations. This makes it harder to generalize or identify set patterns. However, a couple of conclusions can be drawn. The two examples given show polygamy from different sides: the wives and the husband’s. However, both also show the extent of the wives’ influence in the fortunes of their husband and the material nature of polygamous marriage. Rather than a buffet of potential willing mates waiting for his patronage, the

¹²⁷ Thomas Haweis, *A scriptural refutation of the arguments for polygamy, advanced in a treatise entitled Thelyphthora* (London 1781); HW, The unlawfulness of polygamy evinced [electronic resource]; or, observations occasioned by the erroneous interpretations of the passages of the New Testament, respecting the laws of marriage, lately published in a treatise on female ruin, (London 1780).

¹²⁸ Adair, *History*, p217.

¹²⁹ Wright, *The McGillivray and McIntosh Traders*, p77, 81.

¹³⁰ David Taitt in *Travels*, p505, 550; Bartram, *On the Southeastern Indians*, p93, 102, 284.

¹³¹ Wright, *The McGillivray and McIntosh Traders*, p81-82.

man's social behaviour through polygamous marriage was shaped and by his wives' needs, their familial connections and the customary female ownership of goods upon marriage. Where Aleck was determined to fulfill custom and capitulate to his wives' pressure, Galphin had calculated well, his economic prowess working effectively to bring agreeable Creek women to marriage. He recognised that to attract and keep their favour (and land) he had to maintain that obligation over the long term. Other accounts may have suggested that surplus women accounted for the need for polygamy but material imperatives appeared to dominate the marriages more frequently. According to Father Crestien le Clercq, the Mi'kmaq did not practice polygamy, the women modest before marriage and couples monogamous.¹³² This would be consistent given the time taken for engagements and agreements to be made in suitable marriages.

Community approval

In the Southeast, the marriage was almost universally approved of by the community. William Bartram describes the major contribution of friends to the married couple's union, and John Lawson describes the extent of community involvement. For many men, community approval could be acquired by demonstrating hunting skills, the ability to procure material goods, or taking scalps. Milfort, friend to Alexander McGillivray, had claimed that a young man had to procure several scalps to secure a bride.¹³³ But as Mary Musgrove, Sehoy McGillivray, White Captain's Daughter and the Dark Lanthorn showed, a man did not need to kill to be a worthwhile husband – not any more, at least. In this case, the increase of white men into Indian territory either allowed women to make use of an existing Indian marital custom, or they interpreted the meaning of masculine roles in a modern way. The latter would certainly be an interesting development and would have shown that matrilineal customs were flexible and accommodating to the needs of the people and women in particular.

The significance of the community in the role of marriage operated as a control mechanism even as it permitted autonomy and freedom for the woman's choices within this. The community endorsed positive unions, acted as sentinels against abuses when possible, and permitted bad marriages to be rectified in non-hostile ways. Marriages were renewed or concluded at appropriate times, and marital disputes were conducted publicly, allowing

¹³² C. Le Clercq, *New Relation of Gaspesia* (Toronto 1910).

¹³³ Milfort, *Memoirs*, p175.

accountability and grievances to be aired. It ensured that neither the male nor female had excessive control and promoted actions that enhanced community fortunes, for example a good trade marriage that could bring material goods to the town. Women, as key players within the community, were ideally placed to make such decisions and they embraced their role.

The variety of marriages available to women and men reflected their various needs and rapid adaptability to circumstance. It showed a native flexibility regarding perceptions of womanhood and femininity as something that was fluid, changeable and without defined parameters. The expectation that men fit within such marriages also indicates that men's responsibilities regarding women, wives and children were equally changeable. Essentially, women did not occupy one role but had several – and their priorities may have changed depending on circumstance. This shows that men also had a multidimensional view of femininity: shaman, wife, mother, matron, leader, trader, or farmer. By accepting these shifting grounds, men provided a good insight into female status through their own concessions; by accepting a divorce, the relinquishing of hard-earned furs or goods, an affair, a betrayed secret, familial loyalties and the women's strong connection to geographical territory.

Few unions were permanent because circumstances could change at a moment's notice. Towns could be raided, lives could be lost, and that women should live permanently under the shadow of a male death (or vice versa) was not part of the gendered matrix. More important was to quickly form new familial bonds that endured even as parents or children died. In this way the marriage provided the method to achieve social stability but was not the basis of it – in other words the end justified the various means. That such marriage options were customary is further indication of the changing nature of borderland culture and the responsiveness to need. Where a marriage may have brought social dominance for one woman, another may have seen her needs subordinated to a first wife rather than her husband. This in itself distorts traditional concepts of marriage by making the man himself a smaller part of a power dynamic that occasionally sidelined him – literally in some cases.¹³⁴ Perhaps most extraordinary was the adaptability of the white men who chose to spend large parts of their lives living with, marrying and loving Indian women. For every trader who spoke disparagingly of Indian custom, the 'prostitution' of women, and the

¹³⁴ Some men did not always live with their wives but would decamp – or be turned out of the home – to a winter hut to save on grain stores, for example. Archibald Loudon, *A Selection of some of the most interesting narratives of outrages committed by the Indians*, (the press of Archibald Loudon, 1811), Vol II, p147. See also Saunt, *A New Order of Things*, p141.

frivolous nature of ‘country marriages’, other men adapted rapidly, accepting the material and political benefits of the unions. And for each Euro-American man who abandoned or abused his Indian wife, others stayed for the long term or until Revolution forced their removal from Indian territory. These men’s social trade-offs allowed women to continue to maintain their marital and gendered customs in new and beneficial ways, despite external pressures. Coupled with women’s extraordinary ways of handling Euro-American men and their socio-sexual beliefs, these men and women created one possible future for Indian-White relations that was beneficial for all.

Contemporary analysis prefers to view women as mediating their identities to accommodate Euro-American men, but this oversimplifies the social structure in which women lived and operated.¹³⁵ With complex identities and multiple roles already in place, it was hardly necessary to mediate between them. If anything, men such as Galphin made far greater concessions to masculine identities by choosing to make his life among Indians on a permanent basis. Women made fewer concessions regarding identities, and continued to operate with their nuanced view of their worlds.

Men such as Galphin and McGillivray did not appear to be troubled at relinquishing authority, gaining much in exchange.¹³⁶ Nonetheless, the concessions made by white men in Indian marriage were considerable and the contrasts with white custom were striking. For matrilineal peoples, paternal duties were minimal and, familiar with hunting Indian men and absent white ‘husbands’, full-time husbandly presence was neither required nor expected (or necessarily wanted). Where some men may have enjoyed the relinquishing of responsibilities and bond-free sex, in white eyes a marriage remained sacred, a union in the eyes of God, bestowing it a spiritual component and thereby enhancing the gravity of any sexual misdemeanours. Where white unions incorporated and regulated sexual activity within the realms of the marital or paternal household, Indians separated sex from the exclusivity of marriage and fatherly approval. Without marital vows assuming female chastity, companionship and male issue, the marriage assumed a different complexion to the Euro-American one. Further undermining the white man’s traditional role, the family unit – or nuclear family – did not exist. Instead, broader concepts of family incorporated the individual, diminishing the significance of the male compared to the role played by Euro-American men, who would be the pivotal figures in marriages. The needs of women

¹³⁵ Theda Perdue (ed), *Sifters: Native American Women's Lives*, (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), p18, 30.

¹³⁶ McGillivray was a Highlander and came from a matrilineal clan background, perhaps explaining his ease with female roles.

were equally valid within the terms and conditions of the marriage. For that reason many unions were based on material need, less concerned with moral purity and more concerned with goods and advancement of individual or clan status.

This material basis was marked with the exchange of smaller, symbolic gifts indicating each partner's relative merits and promissory contributions to the union. This basis was also the reason for simple dissolution. The union was considered invalid when one party had either fulfilled the contract or had failed, thus leading to easy divorce. This also required an emotional distance between men and women, or at least the ability to disconnect without unwelcome outcomes. This would have made it relatively simple affair to legitimately marry a white man for a single night, whereas Euro-American men often expected a degree of emotional attachment by women to the men they married and vice versa. High-ranking social marriages did not necessarily require this, as marital affection was expected to develop over time. It is no surprise, then, that several contemporary writers and observers described Indian women as "mercenary": the idea of women who remained emotionally detached regarding husbands certainly appeared to cause some discomfort and indicated a distinct absence of deference.

Other factors served to relegate males as primary agents in marriage. Polygamy may have enhanced a man's status but only as far as he provided materially according to marital custom. His lack of complete control over choice of wives and the ability of wives to manipulate and determine economic fortunes shows that polygamy was for the benefit of both sexes, but most especially for the clan. Matrilocality drew men into the Indian village and where women held a strong social presence, men had less stability regarding sexual and marital relations as 'outsiders'. Change was not to be feared but to be responded to in the best possible manner, perhaps seeking new alliances and marriages with influential people. Such nuanced roles – so natural to women – were navigated by white men, sometimes to their advantage and sometimes to their detriment. Nonetheless, their alliances had broad implications for colonial policy as it endorsed matrilineal authority, allowing Indian people to retain a tighter grip on localised Indian identity and nationality.

Overall, marriage acted as a means to enhance town and village or clan, or a stepping stone to individual power through the accumulation of goods to be dispensed to family and friends. This was an option for both parties and was utilised by both sexes. However, women's frequent marriage to white men far outstripped Indian men's marriages to white women. Therefore, the responsibility for long-term social change through marriage lay

with Indian women and Euro-American men. Indian marriage, then, was a reflection of gender values. With these various avenues of expression, women were able to meet their socio-economic needs, parrying rapid colonial changes with a repertoire of tools that could withstand severe fluctuations in times of war. Such feminine resilience required a strong sense of identity, a command of personal autonomy, dynamic authority and the full approbation of the community to see tribal aspirations through to their conclusions. These uses of matronly influence formed the next step in the cycle of the Indian woman's power, and will be examined in the final chapter.

Chapter 5

Civil and Sacred Powers

On September 8, 1756, during the Seven Years' War, Colonel John Armstrong destroyed the Indian village of Kittanning in present-day Pennsylvania. Sitting on the edge of the Allegheny River, the village was a crucial staging post for the Delaware (Lenape) and Shawnee Indians in their war against the British. The destruction of the post was a major blow for the Indians. In the attack, the Indian leader, Captain Jacobs, was killed, along with his family. Armstrong liberated some white prisoners from the village, several of whom were lost on his return to Fort Lyttelton. One of those prisoners – a woman – was recaptured by Indians and executed.¹

The woman was brought back to the remains of Kittanning shortly after the event. One witness, captive 14-year-old Hugh Gibson, described a terrible scene where the woman was tortured to death. The historical account would suggest that the woman had been an unwilling white captive but the torture she endured suggested she was much more than just a prisoner of the Indians. Gibson claimed the Indians had stripped her naked, bound her to a post and applied hot irons. Being skinned alive, the woman had begged for mercy, “screaming in the most pitiful manner”. The torture had continued for some time. However, the “ruthless barbarians were deaf to her agonizing shrieks and prayers; and continued their cruelty till death released her from the torture of those hellish fiends.” Gibson added, “Of this shocking scene at which human nature shudders the prisoners were all brought to be spectators.”²

As a strategic manipulation of enemy sentiments in warfare, the Delaware execution was certainly an effective tool for enhancing one's reputation for ruthlessness and brutality.

¹ Daniel P. Barr, 'Victory at Kittanning? Reevaluating the Impact of Armstrong's Raid on the Seven Years' War in Pennsylvania' *The Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* Vol. 131, No. 1 (Jan., 2007), p5-32. Historians have claimed that the Battle of Kittanning crippled the Delaware offensive. However, Barr has shown that the victory actually reinforced Delaware resolve and increased their attacks. The burning of the woman further validates the extent of their resolve, and explains why the torture was prolonged and intense: it was proportionate to the event.

² Hugh Gibson in Archibald Loudon, *Loudon's Indian Narratives, A Selection of Some of the Most interesting Narratives of Outrages Committed by the Indians in their Wars, with the White People*, Volume II (Whitehall 1808).

However, two things point to a deeper meaning to the torture. The woman was not the only recaptured white person, so why was she chosen for this? What did her death and torture offer that other (male) prisoners did not? Furthermore, the extent of the torture was intense and very prolonged. It was not accompanied by preparations or celebratory ritual according to Gibson – not surprising given the recent defeat at Kittanning. There was no suggestion of adoption. Gibson said, “When Col. Armstrong destroyed the Kittanning, this woman *fled to the white men*, but by some means lost them and fell into the hands of the Indians...” (my emphasis). Gibson’s wording may be ambiguous but there is a possibility that she was more than a prisoner to the Delaware: perhaps an Indian adoptee or a wife. White or Indian, friend or enemy, her recapture had provoked a particularly brutal and violent death. If she had achieved value as a potential Indian, or had become an Indian family member, the status had most viciously and unequivocally been revoked.

The death of the woman (who is unnamed) illustrated the extent to which violence could be inflicted upon women within Indian towns, especially those who had betrayed their Indian families. As a previous enemy, her escape would not have been a betrayal to the Delaware and therefore her recapture would have been part of a general prisoner round-up. However, her ‘escape’ *had* been viewed as a betrayal of some kind, incurring severe wrath and the corresponding punishment meted out.

From birth to death Indian women were familiarised with violence. As a fine and subtle thread that ran throughout their lives, it was accompanied by an increase in command of their bodies as they reached adolescence and sexual maturity, followed by a command of their personal relationships as they engaged in trading, bartering and the continuation of clan lines. This became apparent in a wider context as adulthood and status was achieved. The elements that contributed to the construction of the authoritarian Indian woman became manifest in politics, economics and the performance of violence for the Indian nations, thereby achieving a significant amount of power. The downside: betrayal of those powers carried a heavy sentence.

The eighteenth century saw the emergence of a number of influential Indian women who saw their names, words and deeds recorded in the historical record. Many are well-known to scholars of American History. They include women such as Mary Musgrove, Molly Brant, Sophia Durant, Nancy Ward, Sacagawea and the loyal Catholic Indian Kateri Tekakwitha who was canonised in 2012 by Pope John Paul II. Historically, these women represent both unusual *and* typical Indian women: unusual in that they are named and have

an assured position within the record; typical in that their identities and historical worthiness are constructed around – and determined by – the men in their lives. Although a multitude of Indian male identities are acknowledged in the sources, such as warrior, shaman, chief, elder etc. the majority of Native American females are collectively referred to as ‘women’.³ Historical dependence on this paradigm has provided a rather unlikely depiction of Indian females as essentially sharing the same experience as ‘women’ whilst permitting a one-dimensional view of them to persist that disregards female experiences shaped by age, social role, life experience, material conditions, marital status or maternal circumstance. Not only does the category of ‘women’ remove the need to seek nuance and difference within indigenous women’s lives, the historical attention to indigenous males creates a default Indian identity that is far from representative of women’s experience of social, political and cultural change throughout the century.⁴ These themes are extremely hard to analyse, of course: records can be sparse in places and few of the (male) travellers spent much time seeking the opinions of the women they met. Instead they relied on observation and their own conclusions, shaped by their patriarchal world-view that assumed subordination of women, even within Indian nations, despite overwhelming evidence to the contrary.⁵

Although a handful of historians have recognised the gendered responses to social and political change, the significance of these responses to the construction of Native American *female* authority has yet to be explored. Instead, the responses (such as those from the Indian leader Tenskwatawa who sought regulation of female sexuality) are analysed in terms of male-female divisions rather than the evidence of division and/or variation amongst women themselves.⁶ Without a wide-ranging, detailed study of other Indian groups it is difficult to say if a Mi'kmaq woman's experience closely mirrored her contemporaries in other Indian nations. However, this chapter attempts to bridge a little of this divide to demonstrate that across the eastern seaboard, female powers were complex,

³ Claudio Saunt, *A New Order of Things: Property, Power and the Transformation of the Creek Indians, 1733-1816*, (New York 2006), p139-163.

⁴ Linda Stone & Nancy P. McKee, *Gender and Culture in America*, (New Jersey 1999), p23.

⁵ Stone & McKee, *Gender and Culture in America*, p19. Notable Indian women throughout the eighteenth century who wielded significant power included Nancy Ward of the Cherokees, and Molly Brant, Mohawk and wife of William Johnson, and Queen Anne of the Pamunkeys. See Gretchen M. Bataille, (ed), *Native American Women, A Biographical Dictionary* (New York, London: Garland Publishing, 1993).

⁶ Theda Perdue, *Cherokee Women, Gender, Culture and Change, 1700-1835*; Saunt, *A New Order of Things*; Greg Dowd, *A Spirited Resistance* (Baltimore, London 1992); Daniel Usner, Jr., *Indian, Settlers and Slaves in a Frontier Exchange Economy; the Lower Mississippi Valley Before 1783* (North Carolina 1992); Michael D. Green, *The Politics of Indian Removal: Creek Government and Society in Crisis* (Nebraska 1985).

fluid and adaptable. Although experiencing a variety of hardships and upheavals depending on nation and location, Indian women sought to retain and construct their own narratives on power and authority to meet the challenges of change.

This chapter discusses the variety of ways women performed civil duties for their communities. It explores the wider implication of women's authority and how it impacted upon men and masculinities, spirituality and the eventual alterations to expressions of authority as the eighteenth century drew to a close. The chapter includes elements related to sex, children, violence and marriage: the older woman incorporated these experiences within her life and so they played out in her social expressions of maturity.

Much of the material here concerns Sophia Durant whose privileged position in the historical literature affords many valuable perspectives on how women were viewed by white men, and how women operated within a rapidly changing colonial landscapes. The chapter begins by examining a handful of accounts that describe female violence in order to clearly set the context for ideas of power. This is followed by a brief discussion on spirituality and the sources from which women's sacred power was derived. I then move onto the practical manifestations of authority as witnessed through speeches in the political manoeuvrings of key historical figures, before examining the roles played by unknown women who actively attempted to control and shape their lives on a smaller scale – often at the expense of male Indian ideals. As women retreated from the open political stage they matured into valued counsel. I therefore examine the importance of this position to Indian peoples and ideals surrounding respect for female age and wisdom. The chapter continues with a brief examination of new masculinities, before finishing with an overview of women's struggles to retain their authority in the face of overwhelming odds at the end of the century.

In this chapter the word 'civilisation' and its variations is not used to denote a superior Euro-American lifestyle but to illustrate the preferred alternative to traditional cultural and social practices as promoted by Euro-Americans and British in this period. Likewise, any female 'categories' presented here are not definitive but instead illustrate that identities were diverse and shaped by differing responses to social change.

Violent acts and spirituality

The beginning of this thesis provided some examples of the types of violence committed, perpetrated and performed by women in the eighteenth century. Violent actions ranged from a relatively straightforward burning of a captive to elaborate, organised, and carefully orchestrated acts of aggression. Sometimes the torture was extremely imaginative, and as one reads through the accounts it often appears as though indigenous peoples always managed to find new ways to kill and maim men, women or children. The thought, preparation and care that went into the reception of captives for torture illustrates clearly that contrary to opinion of the time, the torture held a significance that went beyond a simple act of revenge. Nathaniel Knowles, in his general survey of the types of structures used to restrain captives, demonstrates a great deal of preparation and consideration behind ritual violence: collecting of brush for fires, construction of frames, building of platforms, binding of ropes, embers and stones heated, sticks gathered, knives cleaned, tomahawks ready, axes sharpened.⁷ With the entire community involved, the captive often represented a time of celebration (although not for the captive), lauding of returning warriors and lamenting lost kinsmen and women. Furthermore, women themselves were also subject to extreme acts of torture – by men and women. The Chickasaw informed James Adair of “An innocent mother of good report, and two of her little children, put to slow torture in boiling water; and several of the like nature, which the Muskohge themselves had informed them of in a way of boasting”⁸ Women would also participate in warfare as combatants, earning significant respect and additional authority for their actions.⁹

Included here are additional examples to illustrate the impressions observers had of the women who performed these actions on behalf of their people.

A resident of Louisbourg, whose name I will not mention, had gone out there partridge shooting and, in exchange for some furs, gave them (the Indians) a small brandy cask, the equivalent of four or five jars. They became drunk and then

⁷ Nathaniel Knowles, ‘The Torture of Captives by the Indians of Eastern North America’, *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society*, Vol. 82, No. 2 (March 1940) Le Page du Pratz gives very clear descriptions of this process. M. Le Page Du Pratz, *The History of Louisiana, or of the Western Parts of Virginia and Carolina* (London 1774), p354-356.

⁸ J. Adair, *The History of the American Indians* (London 1775), p288. The Muskogee are also sometimes known as the Creeks. The Chickasaw had some enmity with the Creeks and the account may have been exaggerated. However, it is no less extreme than many other actions which is why it is included here.

⁹ D. H. King, (ed) *The Memoirs of Lt. Henry Timberlake, 1756-1765*, (Chapel Hill 2007), p122. Nancy Ward gained distinction for this, becoming chief of the Cherokee.

mercilessly tortured a poor young Englishman, who was eighteen at most, whom they had captured three days before... The women were the most savage and cruel of all towards the young man, because on that occasion most of the women, too, were as drunk as the men. (my parentheses)¹⁰

...each of these furies began to torment her, sometimes with the point of their staff, and sometimes laying on her with all their might. One tore off her hair, another cut off her finger, and every one of those outrageous women endeavored to put her to some exquisite torture, to avenge the death of their husbands and kinsmen, who had been killed in the former wars; so that the unfortunate creature expected her death stroke as mercy. At last one of them gave her a stroke with a heavy club on the head and another ran her stake several times into her body, with which she fell down dead on the spot. Then they cut that miserable victim into morsels, and obliged some slaves of that nation they had been long possessed of, to eat them.¹¹

The victors first strip their miserable captives quite naked, and put on their feet a pair of bear-skin moccasins, with the black hairy part outwards; others fasten with a grape-vine, a burning fire-brand to the pole, a little above the reach of their heads... Each of them prepares for the dreadful rejoicing, a long bundle of dry canes, or the heart of fat pitch-pine, and as the victims are led to the stake, the women and their young ones beat them with these in a most barbarous manner. Happy would it be for the miserable creatures, if their sufferings ended here.¹²

Where their bosoms once harbours cruelty, they carry it greater lengths than even the men, whom they frequently instigate to it.¹³

The prisoners of war are generally tortured by the women, at the party's return, to revenge the death of those that have perished.¹⁴

The violence, so gloriously and colourfully detailed here and also in Chapter 1, is sensationalised, the lurid descriptions eagerly consumed by readers. Other records of the

¹⁰ The Abbé Maillard in R. H. Whitehead, *The Old Man Told Us*, p116.

¹¹ Knowles, 'The Torture of Captives', p168.

¹² Adair, *The History of the American Indians*, p390.

¹³ Maillard, *An Account of the Customs and Manners of the Micmakis and Maricheets*, p15.

¹⁴ King, *The Memoirs of Lt. Henry Timberlake*, p120.

violence, such as those written by the Jesuits, were less concerned with thrilling their readership. In either case, it is quite evident that extreme acts of retribution took place.

There was no doubt that for a captive the physical pain endured was deeply unpleasant. Indigenous captives perhaps best understood the purposes behind the actions, their responses appropriate to the culture and a representation of their nation's virtue. For white captives, the reasons behind the violence would have been a secondary concern. However, the thread of violence throughout women's lives was underpinned and endorsed by a spirituality that permitted expressions of aggression that were uniquely female. More simply, the aggression may have been viewed as a masculine act of war performed by women, hence the sensational – and bookworthy – accounts. However, women and men's range of acceptable behaviours derived from different sources. Unlike European gender binaries that preferred men and women's characteristics to balance each other's, Indian people did not assign all aspects of human nature to oppositional male and female corners. Instead, both sexes experienced a range of similar behaviours with gendered expressions. Part of the puzzle that faced many observers may be attributable to this Indian construction of gendered identities. Gender sociologist R. W. Connell argued that hegemonic masculinity was juxtaposed with marriage whereas femininity was constructed in the subordination of women to men.¹⁵ While this may be true of Euro-American constructions, this does not seem to be the case for many nations of the Eastern seaboard. There is no evidence that Indian men displayed key aspects of their masculinity through marriage and its attendant group of subordinate people. Marriage, as a microcosm of the wider patriarchal worlds for many Euro-Americans, had no relevance for Indian men. By extension, Indian women had no place in relation to men as subordinates or wives, and their identities were certainly not created as a part of masculinity. In fact, female and male identities were constructed independently of each other and can be seen in many creation myths where the female is born of the earth rather than as part of the male body, as depicted in the story of Adam's rib forming Eve. In contrast, the Creek female identity stemmed directly from her relationship to the earth, to the skies, to celestial bodies and to spiritual powers, and although there was a connection to the male within the myths, her significance was determined by much greater powers. Her role as mother did not derive from the male but from the fertile earth (hence one of the cosmological significances of working the land).¹⁶ A similar pattern followed for males, and if these myths performed even a small role in the socialisation of Indians, then the emotional and spiritual

¹⁵ Philomena Goodman, *Women, Sexuality and War*, Hampshire 2002, p23.

¹⁶ David M. Jones & Brian L. Molyneaux, *Mythology of the American Nations* (London 2004).

independence and disconnection of the sexes becomes more comprehensible, as does the reluctance of Indian males to assert 'ownership' of women discussed in the chapter on sexuality.

Many historians recognise that the Indian sexes led very separate lives, and attribute this to either the division of labour or to the matri/patrilineages without recognising that the separations derived from a deeper source. One historian has rightly shown that the matrilineal systems could be viewed as a dividing tool, but they also served to endorse the continuing male practices of hunting and were a unifying element between female and male, no matter how fractured it may have appeared on the surface.¹⁷ 'Separate spheres' did not necessarily mean separate characteristics. However, the geographical space that men and women occupied was gendered, but not always sexed. Several observers remarked on the extent to which women laboured in fields, tending crops, gathering corn and making food. Accustomed to farming land as a primarily masculine task, observers often described female labour as 'drudgery'. They missed the point of Native American belief systems that emphasised the unique female connection to the earth and the ensuing spiritual power as a result of that association. As food providers, tilling the soil held a great deal of cosmological significance for women and their communities, reinforcing daily connections to the other worlds whilst asserting their importance.¹⁸ For patrilineal communities that valued the annual hunt and male labour as vital sources of food, women's connections to spiritual sources were expressed differently.¹⁹ This was highlighted by one Mi'kmaq grandmother's war speech in She stated,

These old firs, these ancient spruce trees, full of knots from the top to the root, whose bark is falling off with age, and who yet reserve their gum and powers of life, do not amiss resemble. I am no longer what I was; all my skin is wrinkled and furrowed, my bones are almost everywhere starting through it. As to my outward form, I may well be reckoned amongst the things, for nothing but to be tally neglected and thrown aside; but I have still within me wherewithal to attract the attention of those who know me.²⁰

¹⁷ Dowd, G. 'Thinking and Believing: Nativism and Unity in the Ages of Pontiac and Tecumseh', *American Indian Quarterly*, Vol 16, No. 3 (1992).

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ "The greatest stress they lay on hunting": Maillard, *An Account of the Customs and Manners of the Micmakis and Maricheets*, p4, 91.

²⁰ Maillard, *An Account of the Customs and Manners of the Micmakis and Maricheets* p17-18.

This part of the speech, taken alone, may appear self-deprecating, and an admission of unworthiness. In fact, the speech came at the end of a detailed description of her achievements, torture of captives and her childbirth records. She harangued and mocked the warriors and young men, and drew attention to her other contributions to the community. During the speech, to which everyone listened with great solemnity, she held up her withered arm, attracting the crowd's attention to it. Her age was her asset and assured complete respect. What was most striking, though, was how she compared herself to the landscape. Nova Scotia was in this period, as it is today, heavily covered with silver birch trees, spruce trees and waterways. The grandmother drew direct links between her physical appearance and that of the trees, which held "the power of life". They were enduring and from them the Mi'kmaq gained sustenance outside of hunting. Women built the canoes and therefore had deep knowledge of the properties of trees, using gum to seal canoes and patch holes.²¹ Wood was crucial to survival: it offered stakes for wigwams, created heat, produced berries, and offered cover and protection from enemies. With intimate knowledge of the forests, women travelled in groups without men and navigated through the myriad of confusing waterways. The grandmother offered a living, breathing reminder to those present that she was the embodiment of the supernatural and spiritual powers she derived from her enduring associations with mother earth.²² Women who foamed at the mouth during torture ceremonies also demonstrated to their people that in that moment, they were expressing a spiritual power.²³

For the Mi'kmaq the Catholic religion offered a confirmation of the spiritual importance of women, despite missionary attempts to restrain their violent excesses of torture and infanticide. The Catholic religion was compatible and strengthening for women, and acted as a spiritually endorsed magnifier of authority.²⁴ Despite British belief to the contrary, the missionaries did not possess complete control of the Mi'kmaq although they were happy to utilise Mi'kmaq anger to threaten enemies – they could only do so with agreement of the

²¹ The Kluscap Heritage Centre of the Millbrook band of Mi'kmaq provides good displays and archaeology relating to work patterns of men and women. Treaty Trail, Millbrook Reservation, Nova Scotia.

²² The Mi'kmaq principles for government were based on The Great Spirit, respect for Mother Earth, and the consensus of the people. Therefore the grandmother's (female) role is of equal importance in a three-way balance.

²³ During his captivity Casteel became afraid when the women began to foam at the mouth. To the Mi'kmaq this signalled the moment that the spirits had entered their bodies and that his torture was about to begin. Casteel, A., *Anthony Casteel's Journal*, (1753), British Museum, Brown MSS. Public Archives of Nova Scotia, Halifax, RG1, no. 23 (copy).

²⁴ Kathleen Bragdon, "Gender as a Social Category in Native Southern New England," *Ethnohistory*, Vol. 43, No. 4, Native American Women's Responses to Christianity (Autumn, 1996), p575; Maillard, *The Old Man Told Us*, p115.

warriors. Neither were the Mi'kmaq "bigoted papists".²⁵ Mi'kmaq women may have continued to exercise leniency towards Catholics and view Protestants as enemies, but priests did not receive religious capitulation in exchange.²⁶ One rescued traveller, shipwrecked in Cape Breton in 1780-81, was affronted to find that his manservant, who had survived alongside him, had raised the affections of an old Mi'kmaq woman due to his Catholic faith.²⁷ He found their singing particularly irritating,

...disturbing us with their psalm-singing the whole night... my servant, being and Irish Catholic, they were exceedingly fond of him and heaped their favours upon him very profusely. He joined them for the most part in their roaring, for I cannot with propriety call it singing, and in their prayers; though he did not understand a word of either. Indeed I question much whether they themselves understood them, for they were the most confused jargon I had ever heard, compounded of their own and the French language with the mixture of a few broken Latin phrases, which they had picked up from their converters, the Jesuits.

Evidently Prenties' gratitude at his rescue was short-lived but the account provides an excellent insight into the weight attached to Catholic faith and the methods Mi'kmaq women used to assert common causes with strangers. Other women were far more direct and demanded that captives make the sign of the cross as a test of their authenticity as allies. Failure to do so meant death at the hands of women. Another old woman, named Canidies, was furious when the warriors had decided to spare the life of a captive. She said, "Who has persuaded you to spare this slave?... He is deceiving you. He is not a Catholic!" The "old witch" then approached the prisoner and made him bless himself. Seeing that he had used the incorrect hand to make the gesture (left) she turned to the crowd. "You have all been witnesses. He is therefore not a Catholic, but an Englishman." They replied, "Take him, grandmother. He is yours." The man was then tortured to death.²⁸

²⁵ Samuel Holland, Surveyor, Nov 24, 1765, in *Holland's Description of Cape Breton Island and Other Documents*, Public Archives of Nova Scotia Publications No. 2, (1935), p67-68.

²⁶ Abbé Maillard writing to Governor Hopson, claimed that Indians were so fond of the Catholic religion that they "look with horror on those not within it" and see them as enemies, Sept 11, 1748., Public Archives of Nova Scotia, pac, mg11 co NS vol. 32 p222; Olive Patricia Dickason, *Louisbourg and the Indians: a Study in Imperial Race Relations*, LAC R64-81/1976-6m, E92 .D53 1971. It is my observation that to the Mi'kmaq priests acted as political liaisons in whom they could trust. However, large amounts of Mi'kmaq followed Catholic missionaries to Newfoundland in 1763-68 after the Expulsion from Acadia.

²⁷ Samuel W. Prenties, *Narrative of a Shipwreck on the Island of Cape Breton in a Voyage from Quebec 1780, By, Ensign of the 84th Regiment of Foot* (London 1782), p54.

²⁸ Maillard, *An Account of the Customs and Manners of the Micmakis and Maricheets*, and also in Whitehead, *The Old Man Told Us*, p116-117.

Catholicism and religion provided an ideal way to assert loyalties. Because of these reasons, female authority – as endowed by supernatural Indian forces – remained relatively intact through much of the eighteenth century. Into the nineteenth century women resisted the preachings of increasing numbers of British protestant missionaries, even as their husbands adopted the new faith.²⁹ Almost all observers who spent time among native peoples referred to the Indian adherence to pleasing ‘gods’, purification rituals, and avoiding angering spiritual forces, seen most obviously in their reluctance to rape women and invoke supernatural, gendered fury.³⁰ Women, then, gained their violent permissions from spiritual sources that reserved specific powers to females. In addition to acts of torture or killing, women were intimately connected with the dead themselves, and in many nations were the only authorised attendees for dealing with a corpse. They dressed the bodies, were official mourners, dug graves, and sat with the deceased over several days.³¹ In a violent world, their spiritual position only emphasised their role. Mourning, then, was not a state of mind assigned to grief-stricken women (although many would have obviously felt grief for loved ones). It was characterised by officially endorsed times of ritual and remembrance, guided and performed by women on behalf of their communities. This suggests a capacity – or at least desire – to move past death as they conducted souls beyond the present world.

Speech and civil power

For women who carried authority derived from such powerful sources, it made sense that this unique position would offer special insights and valued counsel. In addition to contributions as mothers and maidens, women participated in the political arena.

The exploits of Molly Johnson, Nancy Ward and Mary Musgrove have been well documented by excellent historians who carefully explore the specific and public roles of these women.³² Nancy Ward made speeches to white authorities at the start of the American Revolution proposing peace, and warned them of impending Cherokee attacks. In her gendered words she utilised important ideas of family and kin to appeal to Americans: “Let your women’s sons be ours. Let our sons be yours. Let your women hear our words”. Over two decades later, as an older woman of almost 80, she again gendered

²⁹ The Third Annual Report of the Committee of the Micmac Missionary Society, Sept 30, 1851-Sept 29, 1852, Micro CC-25 No. 00996 Library and Archives Canada, Ottawa.

³⁰ Adair, *The History of the American Indians*, p19, 24, 164.

³¹ A. Loudon, *Loudon’s Indian Narratives*, (1811), p146.

³² See Gretchen M. Bataille, *Native American Women, A Biographical Dictionary*, for summaries of native women’s achievements over several tribes. The *Dictionary* described Brant as Johnson’s mistress. Although married to a white woman, Brant would have considered herself Johnson’s equally legitimate wife.

her speech to appeal for peace saying, “Your mothers and sisters ask and beg of you not to part with any more of our land. I have great many grand children which I wish them to do well on our land.”³³

By the end of her life, Ward’s words did not carry quite the same weight among Americans as they had among Cherokees. Mary Musgrove had also struggled to have her voice and opinions respected by white colonial officials, most of whom dismissed her Creek ‘princess’ status and rejected her land claims. Only by commanding hundreds of warriors and issuing dire threats were officials persuaded to take action. In this case, Musgrove and her husband were arrested.³⁴ William Johnson, negotiating with the Iroquois in 1758 during the Seven Years’ War, managed to dismiss the presence of many women from the meetings. Familiar with female Mohawk power (he was married to Molly Brant), he had met with several “head women” and offered gifts and condolences, and answered the speeches presented to him by important women. Showing a great deal of respect for female participation in tribal talks, he finally drew the line at the additional presence of children at meetings, saying he would allow only those who were “Qualified for, and Authorized to Proceed on Business... I could heartily wish that no more persons would attend any more meetings than were necessary for the Discharge of business on Which they were Summoned.”³⁵

Due to the delicately-balanced construction of power among indigenous groups, an attack on, or disrespect for, female civil power and its accompanying speeches, was to show a blatant disrespect for *all* Indian power. Female authority was part of – not separate to – male power. This crucial aspect was overlooked by many colonial observers, perhaps labouring under the belief that Indian male power was reflective of European structures that placed male opinion at a premium. As a result, sensibilities were offended, such as the Creek warriors who were affronted at the Savannah officials’ treatment of Mary Musgrove. However, speeches made by women carried a great deal of civil weight. As illustrated by the Mi’kmaq grandmother, the speeches were prepared and designed to invoke certain behaviours, or perhaps appeal to sympathies, kinship, shared loyalties, hatred of enemies,

³³ Melissa Lukeman Bohrer, *Glory, Passion and Principle: The Story of Eight Remarkable Women at the Core of the American Revolution* (New York: Atria Books, 2003), p244, 247. See also Shirley Raye Redmond, *Patriots in Petticoats: Heroines of the American Revolution* (New York: Landmark Books, 2004).

³⁴ Allen D. Candler, *Colonial Records of the State of Georgia Vol 6* (Atlanta: The Franklin Printing and Publishing Company, 1906), p264.

³⁵ The Papers of William Johnson, 1758 and 1752, in J. Axtell, *The Indian Peoples of Eastern America* (New York 1981) pp.154-7.

or seek peace. The speeches were prepared in advance and were loaded with carefully-constructed meaning.

The Mi'kmaq grandmother speech to warriors, for example, was vivid in its portrayal of torture and killing. Following the slow beating of a drum by a “female savage” the Abbé Maillard described a speech that for him “strongly characterises the sentiments of the savages of that sex.” She said that the men knew,

The creator has given to my share, talents and properties at least of as much worth as your's [sic]. I have had the faculty of bringing into the worlds warriors, great hunters, and admirable managers of canoes. This hand, withered as you now see it, whose veins represent the root of a tree, has more than once struck a knife into the hearts of the prisoners who were given up to me for my sport.

Again invoking nature and summoning the powers of Mother Earth, she added,

Let the river-sides, I say, for I call them to witness for me, as well as the woods of such a country, attest their [sic] have seen me more than once tear out the heart, entrails, and tongue of those delivered up to me, without changing colour, roast pieces of their flesh, yet palpitating and warm with life, and cram them down the throats of others, whom the like fate awaited. With how many scalps have I not seen my head adorned, as well as those of my daughters.³⁶

Other Mi'kmaq women continued to utilize their speech customs, often designed to instill fury in warriors and thus incite greater hatred towards enemies. The Abbé Maillard witnessed this during a ritualised torture ceremony, and claimed that violence was primarily instigated by women. He said of the them,

Then all their apparent rage turns of a sudden against the men. They threaten them, that if they do not supply them with scalps, they will hold them very cheap, and look on them as greatly inferior to themselves; that they will deny themselves to their most lawful pleasures; that their daughters will be given to none but such as have signalised themselves by some military feat; that, in short, they will themselves find means to be revenged of them, which cannot but be easy to do on cowards.³⁷

³⁶ Maillard, *An Account of the Customs and Manners of the Micmakis and Maricheets*, p16-17.

³⁷ Maillard, *An Account of the Customs and Manners of the Micmakis and Maricheets*, p29-30, 15.

For Mi'kmaq women, these visceral speeches were exercises in chastisement and power, public declarations of status. As outsiders to communities who married into patrilineages where men assumed chief roles, women's contributions and status had to be earned through childbearing and other actions. Violent acts required a public acknowledgement in order to validate their status, hence the persistent references to individual efforts of violence. It was also a vivid reminder that young warriors still had much to contribute.

Southeastern women, as leaders within matrilineal societies, focused less on their personal contributions to the nations within their speeches. In 1790, the intention of resentful Creek warriors to violently resist encroaching American settlement was summarily halted by the command of the Creek chief's deputy, Sophia Durant, the elder sister of Alexander McGillivray. At the age of 44 and only two weeks away from giving birth, Durant rode to where the recalcitrant chiefs were camped. She duly summoned, chastised and subdued them. Pickett's *History of Alabama* describes the event in vigorous terms:

In the summer of 1790, while McGillivray was at New-York, the Creeks threatened to descend upon the Tensaw settlers, and put the whole of them to death. Mrs. Durant mounted a horse, with a negro woman upon another, and set out from Little river, camped out at night, and, on the fourth day, arrived at Hickory Ground, where she assembled the Chiefs, threatened them with the vengeance of her brother upon his return, which caused the arrest of the ringleaders, and put a complete stop to their murderous intentions. Two weeks afterwards, this energetic and gifted woman was delivered of twins, at the Hickory Ground.³⁸

This account focused on a number of features that indicated something of the character of Durant. The heroic, Boudicca-like charge whilst heavily pregnant at an advanced age for the time presents a picture of a politically powerful woman, comfortable with her authority and certainly threatening enough to compel arrests of her kinsmen. The narrative emphasises traditionally masculine virtues of physical power, economic success and the respect of men, but for the historian of Native American women it assumes even more significance. The account allowed a rare look at women who operated in the Southeastern world at the end of the century, even if Durant only drew historical attention for her exceptional acts rather than as an example of a 'typical' Creek woman. Pickett described,

³⁸ Albert James Pickett, *History of Alabama, and Incidentally of Georgia and Mississippi, Volume 2*, p127 (Charleston 1851). Pickett interviewed Lachlan Durant, Sophia's son.

and somewhat diminished, Durant's effort as 'gifted' and 'energetic', and although it is hard to argue against her obvious energy, it took far more than a 'gifted' woman to stop an impending Creek assault on white settlers. In the eyes of the warriors her status could not be argued with, much like her predecessor Mary Musgrove earlier in the century. She was not only the chief's sister – a considerable civic authority within a matrilineal society – she was a member of the powerful Wind clan and came from a long line of Creek women who also assumed tribal authority in a similar manner.³⁹

Women such as Durant manoeuvred expertly around the early Georgia political landscape, acquiring wealth through trade, making alliances with influential persons within the colony, chastising Creek chiefs and utilising multiple marriages to white men, all buttressed by her status as a woman with tribal authority as her birthright. Pickett stated that she "had an air of authority about her, equal if not superior, to that of her brother, Alexander."⁴⁰ If true, it was probably because she *did* have as much authority as Alexander McGillivray. After all, she came from a long line of influential women. Sehoy Marchand was grandmother to Durant. Marchand had married her first husband, Captain Francois Marchand from Fort Toulouse, in 1721. She gave birth to another pivotal Wind clan woman, Sehoy II, Durant's mother, who married Scottish trader Lachlan McGillivray and had a number of children with him: three with Lachlan and others with Malcolm McPherson.⁴¹ With traditional power on her side, Sehoy McGillivray utilised her status as clan matron to engineer marriages for her other daughter Jeannet to yet another European man, and also produced Chief Alexander McGillivray, the youngest of the three.⁴² Clearly the Wind Clan women were well-versed in the benefits of such unions and in 1770 Durant followed suit, marrying 16-year-old trader Benjamin Durant at the unusually advanced age of 24.⁴³ The indomitable Durant, therefore, represents a number of crucial aspects of Indian female identity in this period. Although her slaves, wealth and military command were notable (she owned many acres through her family's trading success) her political clout was not particularly unusual among women, as shown by Musgrove. She also came from a long tradition of exposure to Indian-European marriage alliances and retained an

³⁹ Other predecessors included 'queen' Senawki who graciously welcomed the first settlers to Georgia in 1732 along with husband Tomochichi, who permitted the settlement of Savannah. Diary of Peter Gordon 1732-1740, Hargrett Rare Books and Manuscript Collection, University of Georgia MS 791, Box 9, folders 47-48.

⁴⁰ Pickett, *History of Alabama*, p126-127.

⁴¹ G. A. Waselkov, *A Conquering Spirit, Fort Mims and the Redstick War of 1813-1814* (Tuscaloosa: The University of Alabama Press, 2006), p37.

⁴² Louis Le Clerc, Milfort, *Memoirs or a Quick Glance at my Various Travels and my Sojourn in the Creek Nation* (Paris: 1802), J. F. McDermott (ed), p224-225.

⁴³ Waselkov, *A Conquering Spirit*, p37.

inherited knowledge of white men from her foremothers. Her actions and decisions were endorsed by tradition and matrilineal privilege, and the bi-lingual Durant was well accustomed to making speeches. Her talks, prepared in advance, therefore carried a great deal of weight, to which the Creek chiefs listened with “delight”.⁴⁴

Like her contemporaries, many speeches would have urged peaceful intentions. Nancy Ward’s speeches were certainly ‘peaceful’ but it did not prevent her from torturing captives – essentially, peace could be achieved through death. It was an end and a beginning in itself. Likewise, the Mi’kmaq women’s speeches also appealed to success in peace matters. “I have often brought about alliances, which there was no room to think could ever be made,” said one woman, “and I have been so fortunate, that all the couples whose marriages I have procured, have been prolific, and furnished our nation with supports, defenders, and subjects, to eternise our race, and to protect us from the insults of our enemies.”⁴⁵

Oratory, then, was a determining aspect of female civil authority. It scolded wayward men, instigated violence among young warriors, lauded women’s purpose and roles, achieved peace, shaped war, advised on councils and – in the case of Sophia Durant and Mary Musgrove at least – had a major impact on the direction of war itself. The women who performed these speeches had made a significant contribution to their nations. To achieve such a worthy role, age and experience itself was the only route to valid civil power.

Ageing and chastisement

In the Southeast, speeches often embodied general community consensus on certain matters. Benjamin Hawkins, Creek Indian agent acting on behalf of George Washington, sought to help ‘civilise’ the Creeks. This necessitated a major shift in traditional Indian hunting and agriculture, advocating that women should now work within the home whilst encouraging Indian men to take up farming. As a result of his extended stay among the Creeks and Cherokees from 1796 until 1816, he found himself the recipient of many such speeches, often imparted by older matrons and mothers. Their tone displayed little deference to men, and no concession to his enthusiasm for “civilisation”.

⁴⁴ Pickett, *History of Alabama*, p127; Waselkov, *A Conquering Spirit*, p37; Carolyn Thomas Foreman, *Chronicles of Oklahoma*, Volume 7, Oklahoma Historical Society (1929).

⁴⁵ Maillard, *An Account of the Customs and Manners of the Micmakis and Maricheets*, p17.

The line between older women, married women, matrons and mothers is hard to determine. It is not clear at what age white observers considered women to be ‘old’ beyond those who were specifically described as having white, silver or grey hair. Some women may have been considered old by white standards but relatively young by Indian standards i.e. perhaps having fewer children. The opposite may have been true. For the purposes of this section on age, however, I have used the actual descriptions as a guide, along with the certainty that long and public speeches were rarely made by younger or less experienced women (regardless of age).

Hawkins recognised that women carried certain civil authority. Whilst maintaining some affection for the Creeks, he nonetheless wished to turn the women from authority figures to supportive, dutiful and obedient wives. As discussed previously, his meeting with a woman who had offered him her daughter in marriage ended abruptly. He said, “Most of these Creek women, being in the habit of assuming and exercising absolute rule, such as it was, over their children, and not attending to the advice of their white husbands, and taking part with them when they found it necessary to oppose any unjust pretensions of their families, I determined to address a note to the old woman, and read it to her and daughter, in the Creek tongue.” There followed a list of his requirement of a wife and of course, the woman refused to consent to his terms.⁴⁶

Hawkins attributed her refusal to the general temperament of Creek women but in fact, their suspicion of white men ran deep. By not keeping a firm hand on terms and conditions of sexual or marital union with white men, women could expose themselves to abuse. These older women posed a challenge for Hawkins, one of whom, Old Queen of the Cherokees at Tallassee, “summoned” him to her home where he found her surrounded by her brother, an older man and three warriors.⁴⁷ Her matrilineal authority endowed her with the confidence to issue a command to a white man of Hawkins’s status and an assurance of his compliance, too – after all, like Durant, elder women could prove to be formidable opponents, particularly when arranging marriages to reluctant white suitors.

Despite historical records that often speak of older, post-menopausal or “super-annuated” women (as described by Adair) in denigrating or dismissive terms, the position of elder

⁴⁶ Benjamin Hawkins in H. Thomas Foster, (ed) *The Collected Works of Benjamin Hawkins*, 1796-1810 (Tuscaloosa, London: The University of Alabama Press, 2003), p84-85.

⁴⁷ Benjamin Hawkins, Letters, Jan 23, in *Collected Works*, p63.

woman held considerable power, as they could now claim an enhanced spiritual and social authority with their advanced age.⁴⁸ Such women became “War Women”, “Beloved Women” or “Pretty Women”, and their power was so great they could veto council decisions.⁴⁹ The missionary David Zeisberger added, “Formerly, the young revered the old, especially if they had gray or white heads. They believed that these must be very wise and prudent, because they were of such an age and seemed to be favored of the gods.” Children were further instructed to respect age “and to be obedient to their words, because experience has given them wisdom”.⁵⁰ From the examples given of the matrons’ determination to seek marriages for their daughters that promoted clan position, their manoeuvrings had the potential to cause unrest, particularly when dealing with younger generations. Hawkins had noted that the children had seemed “exceedingly” afraid of white people and when he asked the mothers for the reason, they claimed the older townspeople had remembered the white people from previous violent encounters and:

...had been much horrified by the whites , that the old people remembered their former situation and sufferings and frequently spoke of them. That these tales were listened to by the children and made an impression which showed itself in the manner I had observed.⁵¹

This attachment to story-telling and oratory showed one lingering traditional pastime, but also demonstrated a generational division among women as to what “civilisation” could offer for their individual needs and circumstance as the Southeast underwent social and political change. Where some younger women may have embraced change, older women resisted encroachment in many ways. However, this should not be confused with enmity or hostility among women, which characterised many male differences such as those that became evident in the Nativist movement.⁵² Within the Nativist movement, different views on how best to deal with social changes within the American Republic resulted in

⁴⁸ Adair, *The History of the American Indians*, p125, 148; B. Romans. *A Concise Natural History of East and West Florida* (New York 1776), p41, 61, 69, 78.

⁴⁹ King, D. H., (ed) *The Memoirs of Lt. Henry Timberlake, The Story of a Soldier, Adventurer, and Emissary to the Cherokees 1756-1765*, p122; John Haywood, *The Natural and Aboriginal History of Tennessee, up to the First Settlements Therein by the White People, in the Year 1768* (Nashville 1823).

⁵⁰ A. B. Hulbert, *David Zeisberger's History of the North American Indians* (Ohio 1910), p75-76. This was supported by many other observers; George Henry Loskiel, *History of the Mission of the United Brethren Among the Indians in North America* (London 1794), p63; Loudon, *Loudon's Indian Narratives*, p287-288.

⁵¹ Hawkins, *Collected Works*, p32, 33.

⁵² John Sugden, ‘Early Pan-Indianism; Tecumseh's Tour of the Indian Country, 1811-1812’, *American Indian Quarterly* Vol 10, No 4 autumn 1986, pp 273-304; Merrell, Mancall, *American Encounters: Natives and Newcomers from European Contact to Indian Removal, 1500-1850*, (New York 2000).

opposition and bloodshed between opposing groups of men: those who supported conciliation and accommodation with whites, and those who rejected it. Conversely, a variety of feminine identities appeared to live relatively harmoniously as several generations often residing within the same areas sharing different views on the benefits of ‘civilisation’.

Older women retained more traditional values, and although they had no mouths to feed they expected care from relatives and obedience, exemplified by Old Queen. Women of Durant’s generation had different needs – many of her children were grown but she had a commercial enterprise to steer and a political voice.⁵³ As a woman of standing, Durant’s authority also came with advanced age and was reflected in the weighty words of other matrons who could be scathing and contemptuous, sometimes of Indian men and occasionally of white men too.⁵⁴ Hawkins’ felt the force of their reproaches during his visit in December 1797 to Etaw Wah where Indian feelings were elucidated by a group of women whose speech was the most elegant personification of bitterness, chastisement and reproach.

They in the morning told me that many men had been sent into this nation to their chiefs but I was the first who thought it worthwhile to (enquire) into the situation of the women. I had addressed myself to them and talked truly and fondly to them, and they were sure I meant to better their conditions. They would follow my advise (sic).⁵⁵

Despite apparent supplication and gratitude for Hawkins’s attentions, the matrons’ speech followed the patterns evident in many male Indian speeches that often acknowledged longevity of friendship/association, stated their needs, subtly berated the whites then offered symbolic or conditional deference.⁵⁶ The women then expressed affront at being ignored by white men, indicating that their sense of entitlement and female seniority persisted within the tribes and towns. They said,

⁵³ Hawkins, *Collected Works*, p63.

⁵⁴ Hawkins, Letters Dec 29 in *Collected Works*, p92; Pickett, *History of Alabama*, p126; Diary of Reverend Musgrove, Candler, Allen D. *Colonial Records of the State of Georgia Vol 6* (Atlanta: The Franklin Printing and Publishing Company, 1906)

⁵⁵ Hawkins, *Collected Works*, p28. Cherokee women also agreed with this when he toured among them; Claudio Saunt, *A New Order of Things*, p153.

⁵⁶ Complete deference was generally shown only when in a position of weakness.

When white men have come into our nation, they have never studied the good of the women, nor endeavoured to better their oppressed condition. All they have hitherto done is to make our situation more wretched. They have employed every art to raise and shorten our petticoats, and have thereby left us more exposed and naked than they found us.⁵⁷

Although the failings of Indian males were implicit in these words, their focus was on the white man's flaws. They identified themselves as 'oppressed' and commented on the duplicitous ploys of white men in order to further demean them. Therefore, their acceptance of Hawkins gift of 'civilisation' was conditional on his continued appreciation and respect for their social roles. They added:

...You, father, commiserate our condition; you pity our nakedness and weakness; you say you will instruct us to cover ourselves, and be decent and warm; you will enable us to support ourselves, so that we and our children will be in no danger of starving in the swamps. You come to lengthen our petticoats, and extend them over us from the hips to the ankles. Father, we will follow your advice: speak and we will obey."⁵⁸

In this elegant change of tack, the women superficially appealed to Hawkins's pity and paternal benevolence, as though accepting its protective values. However, it is apparent that they viewed him as a vehicle to help them achieve a continuation of their self-sufficiency, and their words reveal a firm resolve to retain independence whilst accepting the benefits of 'civilisation'. The "lengthening their petticoats" suggested a welcome return to their previous dignified state, an anticipated greater position in white male eyes, and simultaneously separated their experiences and needs from Indian males' concerns. Although such speeches helped locate Hawkins as a 'champion' of women in the literature, what is more interesting is how the elder women positioned *him* in their talks. First, they reminded him of his status as a white man whilst tactfully disassociating him from men's worst crimes towards women. They then designated him the social role of 'father', which did not indicate an open-arms policy towards a removal of female power, but signalled their expectations of him as a provider of basic necessities to conversely facilitate their

⁵⁷ Samuel L. Mitchill, M.D., Progress of the Human Mind from Rudeness to Refinement: Exemplified in the Methods Pursued by Col. Benjamin Hawkins to Civilise Certain Tribes of Savages, the *American Monthly Magazine and Critical Review*, Vol III, No. 5, Sept. 1818, p358-362.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

own independence – the one common theme among several adapting female identities in this period. Hawkins could have expected more accommodating women had they referred to him as ‘brother’ or ‘uncle’.⁵⁹

For Indian grandmothers and matrons, chastisement was a tool to shame and humiliate. One thing that Indians sought to avoid was public humiliation and censure. It acted an effective brake on excess and was intended to make hot-headed warriors consider carefully the impact of their actions and how such actions had a detrimental effect on the community. Any speech that contained such censure was taken extremely seriously. However, for Hawkins the undercurrent of the women’s talk went unheeded and he continued to adhere to his beliefs in the benefits of civilisation. During his trip Hawkins had met with Durant at her plantation. Durant’s identity was rooted in matrilineal status that expressed status by dispersing goods rather than accumulating them. However, noting the absence of grandeur appropriate to a planter, Hawkins preferred to focus on her “poor and dirty” state and the “small hut” she lived in. He gave only a token nod to her clan matron role, choosing to identify her as a victim of poor economic circumstance.⁶⁰ No amount of eloquent speechmaking could convince Hawkins that a woman of Durant’s standing deserved anything less than the advantages of a refined life.

Women’s ageing civic authority was used in a multitude of ways and for many purposes, from glorious war efforts in extracting victory from enemies in torture, to rousing speeches and damning criticisms. As conduits of violence this civic duty expressed itself in seemingly maternal ways also.⁶¹ Many captives found themselves assigned the role of vessels to carry the souls of deceased relatives. Some became adopted by their new ‘mothers’ and others were not so lucky. In 1760 the captive surgeon David Menzies learned he was to be adopted by a Cherokee matron to replace a chief. Overjoyed at the prospect of not only staying alive, but perhaps being favourably treated, he was horrified to discover that she had changed her mind. He said, “The mother fixed first her haggard bloodshot eyes upon me, then riveting them to the ground, gargled out my rejection and destruction.”⁶² Menzies was turned over for torture and survived, but his experience acts as an example of how women determined the appropriate captive for the designated purpose:

⁵⁹ Theron A. Nunez, Jr., Creek Nativism and the Creek War of 1813-1814. Part 2 (Stiggins Narrative, Continued), *Ethnohistory*, Vol. 5, No. 2 (Spring, 1958), pp. 131-175.

⁶⁰ Hawkins, Letters, Tuesday 20th Dec 1796, *Collected Works*, p92.

⁶¹ Women decided the fate of captives in most indigenous groups on the Eastern seaboard. Karen Anderson, *Chain Her by One Foot*, (London, New York, 1991), p173.

⁶² David Menzies, “A True Relation of the Unheard-of Suffering of David Menzies, Surgeon, Among the Cherokees, and of His Surprising Deliverance”, *Royal Magazine* (July 1761) p27-29.

was he suitable as an adoptee, a means to avenge an angry spirit (torture), a slave or a simple captive? Whatever he had been told by his captors, it was ultimately for women to decide his fate and the nature of his conclusion.

The performance of the captive was crucial for many Indians. Accounts vary dramatically and so it hard to assess what exactly women sought from captives during ritualised violence. Some performed bravely and were released due to their heroism. Other captives were executed abruptly with tomahawks where others endured violence for 24 hours. Some captives sang and smiled their way through the events (usually Indian), others wept bitterly. And some were cannibalised where other captives were forced to cannibalise their fellow captives.⁶³ If women sought peace by ending life, it must surely have had variable outcomes. In any case, women's jobs included transforming war to peace and part of that included easing the transition for the deceased; turning life (captive) to death, and from death to the next world. The maternal role, then, was one of conflict for some captives (or survivors) who felt anything but motherly love. Some women treated for the exchange of white captives, showing a departure from traditional assessments of captive 'value', where others rapidly despatched them.⁶⁴ Other white men were luckier. Samuel Prenties's life was saved through the approval of an old woman. His gratitude at her mercy was somewhat diminished, though, when he realised it would only happen for financial remuneration. And she drove a hard bargain. During his recuperation he "was obliged to pay, as before, a most exorbitant price for our diet, and for every necessary that we were provided with."⁶⁵

The elder women's peace role, ultimately understood by many observers to be one of *ensuring* peace by using peaceful actions, often missed the fact that achieving this objective involved more ambiguous definitions of peace. Loskiel described the role of the Delaware, who were assigned the role of 'women' alongside the Iroquois. Their mission was to function as the woman within the tribe, to be central and to control the violence of the surrounding males. She alone could chastise others.

⁶³ There are many accounts of appropriate captive behaviour. Adair gives a particularly interesting story about one Musgokee, "Old Scrazy", who demonstrated enough bravado to ensure his release by the Shawnee. Shawnee women also tortured captives. Adair, *The History of the American Indians*, p392.

⁶⁴ In a further example of the role women had in handling captives, a Colonel Butler found himself treating with an Indian woman for the release of captives. The woman agreed to terms but insisted on another 20 days with the captive. This may be related to the period in which a deceased relative remains within the captive. Some captives were also assigned an economic value. Loudon, *Loudon's Indian Narratives*, p119.

⁶⁵ Prenties, *Narrative of a Shipwreck*, p56.

The woman shall not go to war but endeavour to keep peace with all. Therefore if the men that surround her beat each other, and the war be carried on with violence, the woman shall have the right of addressing them, 'Ye men, what are ye about, why do ye beat each other? We are almost afraid. Consider that your wives and children must perish, unless ye desist. Do ye mean to destroy yourselves from the face of the earth? The men shall hear and obey the woman.'⁶⁶

The instructions were explicit. Women were the focal point around which serious war decisions would be made. Nonetheless, this could be achieved through violence, which the Delaware were quick to remind the Iroquois. Relating to age and ageing, this civic role was enhanced by maturity as the grandmothers and matrons came to embody all facets of native life: war-making, becoming conduits of life and death, inspiring speech, the production and control of warriors, food production, fighting, killing, torturing, guidance, counsel, alliance-making and motherhood.

Accountability

One further aspect to female civic powers involved the appropriate use of them. For the most part women seemed to perform their tasks well, taking great pride in status and authority but inevitably there were drawbacks. Accompanying the extensive decision-making powers was the power to exact great damage upon the nations, should the authority be misplaced.

Several visitors among the Indians testified to the anger felt by Indian communities at betrayals. Inciting a deep wrath, the offender most certainly endured a horrific and prolonged death. Loudon's *Narratives* described one Indian who had visited an adopted white family. Suffering a knife attack by another man, he had stayed with the white family and had been treated by them. On his return to the Delawares, they killed him for joining the white people.⁶⁷ According to June Namias, torture of returning deserters was acceptable.⁶⁸ Having acted as deserters they had effectively neutralised their Indian status. Namias's survey covered numerous captivity narratives and the evidence certainly bears

⁶⁶ Loskiel, *History of the Mission of the United Brethren*, p125-126. According to the Delaware, after lengthy wars, the Iroquois had approached the Delaware wishing to end the fueds. It was at the Iroquois suggestion that the Delaware act as intermediaries, peacemakers and wise counsel.

⁶⁷ Loudon, *Loudon's Indian Narratives*, p64.

⁶⁸ June Namias, *White Captives, Gender and Ethnicity on the American Frontier* (Chapel Hill 1993), p52.

this out. The rules were applicable to whites who became Indian, adoptees, and others who were awarded clan or family status – whether they wanted it to not. Viewed from a spiritual perspective, if the captive replaced (or indeed contained) a relative, the execution of even white captive deserters presented a definite logic.

When it came to women, though, ‘betrayals’ presented a grey area. Women, acting separately to men’s interests and seeking their own interpretations of clan and community interests, often clashed with male ideals. Most commonly, this was evidenced in the passing on of secrets and information to white men, usually regarding forthcoming raids or attacks. The historical record is full of such examples. Simply helping settlers avoid attacks was not too bad – it was an inconvenience for Indian men but no-one died on either side. However, an attack such as Kittanning would have had horrific consequences for anyone found betraying the Indians. Events that drew attacks and caused the death of Indians would be punished accordingly for in that moment, the betrayer had identified themselves not as Indian, but as enemy. Women were aware of this fact, even those acting on behalf of white husbands.⁶⁹

Many similar examples punctuate the historical record.⁷⁰ Some historians have viewed the women’s actions in terms of their relationships to the husbands: essentially, the women were acting as a wife and not an Indian, and were serving husband’s interests.⁷¹ Trading secrets was forbidden of course, but engagement with the enemy was not necessarily forbidden.⁷² Women were attached to clan and lineage before husbands, especially those who enjoyed serial marriages. Therefore their actions were based in another imperative. Durant provides some insight here. Knowing full well the consequences for the Creeks of an attack on Tensaw settlers, she halted it. Other women without elevated status found alternative ways to act and informed white men accordingly (such as Cotymore’s Cherokee women in the previous chapter). After all, in testing times they had as much to lose as privileged women. Would The Dark Lanthorn or White Captain’s Daughter have informed

⁶⁹ Richard Cotymore’s Diary, Richard Cotymore’s Diary of Fort Prince George, 1760, Jan 23, PRO WO 34/35. The letter was sent to Governor Lyttelton. See also ‘War Husbands’ in Marriage chapter.

⁷⁰ Adair, *The History of the American Indians*, p264; Knowles, ‘The Torture of Captives’, *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society*, Vol. 82, No. 2 (March 1940), p180, 196. Informants of Swanton, the 19th century Indian ethnographer, had told him stories of the Creeks who had once tortured one of their own tribe who had been adopted by the Choctaw and had then fought against his own people.

⁷¹ Perdue, *Cherokee Women*, p100.

⁷² See chapters on Marriage and Sexuality for Mi’kmaq marriage vows.

their husbands of impending attack? Perhaps, but probably not out of affection or wifely duty.

Women acted as barometers of change. They talked and debated with each other and in councils. They made marriage decisions based on their own interests and clan interests. They traded, sought peace, and changed their children's names to reflect white customs, seeing the need to adopt new ways of expressing their status. Like Durant, many owned land and lived as planters, relying on extensive and sanguine relationships with dozens of traders throughout the Southeast. Children like the young Mary Musgrove and Alexander McGillivray were sent to schools and educated to assist them in their colonial advancements. Others refused to educate their children in the white manner, despite husbandly protestations, preferring traditional methods for their children.⁷³ In other words, women operated as watchmen and anticipated change or developments. Where warriors were expected to react when incited to fight, women were expected to consider longer-term objectives. Endowed with huge responsibilities their actions were rooted in concerns that were larger than just their husband's safety. The impact of losing a husband to an Indian raid had material implications that involved loss of status and bargaining power. Furthermore, an attack on settlers would inevitably draw retaliations, thereby affecting women and their families directly. Not only would trading be affected, but so too would they lose any hope of seeking preferential treatment if whites should ever succeed in permanently over-running Indian worlds. Nancy Ward's political actions managed to avoid this very scenario, and she ensured safety for her town at least from white attacks.⁷⁴

Other women did not have the same fortunes as Durant or Ward, however, and in a similar period Mi'kmaq women were still living primarily off the hunt. Samuel Prenties reported that the Mi'kmaq living extremely basic lives in very hostile conditions. He himself had dreadful hypothermia and was saved via the approval of an old woman.⁷⁵ Those who remained on the ever-decreasing lands in the Southeast often scratched out survival as best they could, relying on themselves and cultivation of a small patch of maize, rather than Indian men, to provide essential goods such as food and clothing. Hawkins's arrival in Creek country during hunting season in December 1796, where he was unlikely to encounter many males, allowed him to fully appreciate the varying situations of women and he seemed genuinely concerned at evidence of poverty, deeming the state of the

⁷³ Waselkov, Braund, *William Bartram on the Southeastern Indians*, p102.

⁷⁴ Bohrer, *Glory, Passion and Principle*, p244, 247. See also Redmond S. R., *Patriots in Petticoats* (New York: Landmark Books, 2004).

⁷⁵ Prenties, *Narrative of a Shipwreck*, p51.

women a reflection on the failings of Indian men.⁷⁶ Unlike Indian men who often resisted the idea of regular, formalised labour, many women declared themselves happy to work as hard as necessary to support themselves. They sold fowl for binding and baskets of corn for salt (for preserving the hogs they raised), made sugar, cotton, pots and pans, and travelled great distances to trade for a variety of items. In addition to this work, many women were prepared to add another skill to their repertoire by learning to spin and weave.⁷⁷ On a visit to another town the women visited Hawkins to hear his discussions on the government's plans for the Creeks. He said:

They informed me the men were all in the woods hunting that they alone were at home to receive me, that they rejoiced much at what they had heard_and hoped it would prove true that they had made some cotton and would make more and follow the instructions of the agent and the advise of the President. They exhibited to me a sample of their engenuity in the once manufacture of baskets and sifters.⁷⁸

Women often traded goods for clothing items and it made sense that the opportunity to weave their own cloth would be welcomed.⁷⁹ Furthermore, the raising of fowl and hogs provided meat in the absence of male success in hunting, and as meat procurers this effectively made women 'hunters' while devaluing the sparse, economic returns of the male hunt.

It is clear why women felt the need to protect what remained of their worlds. Trading secrets and information with the 'enemy' as determined by Indian men, was a worthwhile risk. The difference lay in defining 'enemy'. An enemy to men was not always an enemy to women and if that was the case then informing men of attacks was not really an act of war in their eyes, even during the violence of the Seven Years' War. On the other hand, the growing fragility of Indian masculinity meant that many of those narrowly-averted attacks were increasingly difficult to digest. For women to actively thwart warriors' carefully-planned assaults – intended to reassert dominance over encroaching white neighbours – would not have been tolerated easily. By this part of Hawkins's tour in 1796, the Southeastern Indian community was beginning to fracture across such gender lines along with increasing economic pressures. And as women's economic opportunities widened

⁷⁶ Mitchill, *Progress of the Human Mind*, p358-362.

⁷⁷ Hawkins, *Collected Works*, p18, 19; Mitchill, *Progress of the Human Mind*, p358-362.

⁷⁸ Hawkins, Letters, Thu Nov 30, 1796, in *Collected Works*, p20.

⁷⁹ Mitchill, *Progress of the Human Mind*, p358-362.

through the “civilisation” process, such as weaving, farming and material dependency on white husbands, opportunities for Indian men contracted threatening their masculine ideals.

Masculinities

By the start of the nineteenth century the Creek understanding of enemy was clear. In addition, female authority had undergone significant changes and the changes became manifest in the Creek Laws. Here, women were subject to more rigorous controls on their personal and marital choices but remained responsible for war actions.⁸⁰ Men could punish their wives for adultery, women were subject to more controls over the men they married, and white men’s access to women was also restricted. The laws were not gender neutral as before.⁸¹

The foundation of these restrictions on female power were established at the latter end of the eighteenth century and signalled multiple changes for women. Creek historian Michael Green points out that the 1818 Laws were created as Creeks sought to retain autonomy whilst finding accommodation with neighbouring Americans. These laws altered inheritance customs and officially instituted patrimony over the primacy of matrilineages. By the time the 1823 laws were written, the focus was clearly on control of property by males, which necessarily impacted on women who had previously retained material possessions.⁸² Designated the first of the five “civilised” nations under George Washington’s “civilisation” plan at the end of the eighteenth century, the absence of gendered neutrality in the Creeks’ new laws signalled a manifest change in the political direction of the nation.⁸³ Essentially, the subordination of women and property to was key to a “civilised” life and Indian masculine advancement.

For the Mi'kmaq most changes came after the Expulsion of the Acadians in 1755, and for the rest of the Eastern Seaboard, post American Revolution. The Mi'kmaq dispersal to other parts of French Canada makes it harder to analyse precisely how much female power

⁸⁰ “Any person who tells lies that brings disaster on the nation punished by death”. Chilly Mackintosh, Creek Law No. 48, (7th January, 1823), Keith Read Manuscript Collection, Hargrett, UGA.

⁸¹ Chilly Mackintosh, Creek Law No. 48, (7th January, 1823, ending 15th March, 1824), Keith Read Manuscript Collection, Hargrett, UGA.

⁸² M. D. Green, *The Politics of Indian Removal: Creek Government and Society in Crisis* (Nebraska 1985), p69-71.

⁸³ Benjamin Hawkins, *The Collected Works of Benjamin Hawkins, 1796-1810* (Alabama 2003), pvii-xiv. The civilisation plan involved introducing the Creeks, Choctaws, Cherokees, Chickasaws and Seminoles to the benefits of farming, literacy, patrilineal descent, Christianity, and the primacy of the written word over oral traditions.

and masculinities were impacted. The few Mi'kmaq that remained in Nova Scotia for the next decades eventually departed to Cape Breton or Newfoundland, or lived semi-agricultural lives, swapping hunting dependency for other means of subsistence, utilising traditional craft-working to help make ends meet. Mi'kmaq did not face the severe wrenching of identities to the same degree, due to ideals that privileged men as providers. Nonetheless, the basis on which to provide for one's family – being mobile with access to hunting land – was fragile, and without these elements the central characteristics of the Mi'kmaq were weakened. Men and women's roles were severely curtailed as the British effectively – and finally – ended warfare. As Mi'kmaq masculinities altered along with changes to land use, the land that facilitated power struggles among males thereby reduced masculine expression and by extension, female expression. Outwith the period of this study, the Mi'kmaq did appear to adopt more Anglicised lives and were the recipients of some missionary enterprises, adopting English names, thus making it harder to trace many of the women. Therefore, this section deals with Southeastern Creek women who felt the full force of gendered imperatives that sought to restrict their authority.

Regarding Creek laws, the conflation of white attitudes towards women and the Creek incorporation of white patriarchal custom was troubling. Indian husbands had previously been separated and ambiguous towards women, whereas white men felt a duty of care and protection towards women, conducted on a daily basis and integral to the masculine character. This was exemplified by Hawkins' approach to the Creeks. In theory, paternalism tempered the excesses of violent male behaviours towards women i.e. men had power but it must not be used to abuse the 'weaker' sex. However, Indians had treated women as complementary equals and women therefore shared in the burden of responsibility, being held physically accountable for their political actions. In other words, physical punishment was part of life when necessary and was proportionate to the authority they held. However, under the new Creek laws, women had significantly less power but it was not accompanied by the corresponding paternal idealism. Essentially, extreme physical punishments remained but without the ideological restraint of men who had been raised according to specific Euro-American gender values. Community punishments were certainly not relative or proportionate to the crime according to *white* mores.

The British had been persistent throughout the century in their attempts to reassign women's cultural worth. In Euro-American eyes, women enjoyed legitimacy when operating as wives and daughters within patriarchal families, and speeches given to Creeks by colonial officials show the preferred categorisation of women as wives and dependents.

In talks with the Creeks in February 1760, Georgia governor Henry Ellis made the female position clear when he urged the chiefs to restrain their impulsive “madmen” and not to turn their backs on their English friends during a period of enmity with the Cherokees: “... If you would show yourselves Men, Friends to the English; to your selves, to your wives, and your children; you will join with us on this occasion to punish the madness and Treachery of the Cherokees.”⁸⁴

As discussed in the chapter on marriage, Creek men’s lives and loyalties were essentially divided between families: on the one hand they were primarily responsible for the material care of their own offspring, but had obligations of providing ‘paternal’ guidance to their *sister’s* children. Matters of discipline regarding their own children fell to the mother and her brothers. The division between Indian men and white men, and how each group recognised issues of paternal care, are evident in much colonial correspondence. For example, in 1765, Indian agent John Stuart instructed the Chickasaws, “... You must advise your people to be Industrious and good Hunters, and to depend on themselves for Cloathing their Families and Supplying their wants”.⁸⁵ These instructions revealed three concerns of the Euro-Americans regarding their Indian neighbours. It emphasised a specific (and approved) masculinity that had a direct correlation between manliness (“show yourselves Men”), the required ‘wife’ to fulfil this status, and the dependency of biological offspring. The speech further invoked the enemy as a means to achieve this masculinity whilst cementing alliances. Although the attempt to rouse animosity for old enemies and the dependency of children would have resonated with Creek masculine ideals and showed understanding of the Creek masculinity, the assignment of dependent status for wives (as opposed to women) appeared rather incongruous with evidence that white men were fully aware of: that as farmers, women had long been the primary food producers in the Southeast.⁸⁶ Despite this evidence, the theme was repeated throughout century. Speaking to the Creeks in 1782, John Martin, governor of Georgia, further emphasised the apparent dependency and powerlessness of indigenous women and the dire situation encountered by those who had lost their husbands:

We always desired you to remain at home quietly and Peaceably, and to mind your hunting & Support your women and children in peace & happiness. But now your

⁸⁴ Henry Ellis February 9 1760, Henry Ellis Papers 1757-1760, Georgia Historical Society MS942.

⁸⁵ John Stuart, March 27, 1765, Speech to Chickasaw and Choctaw chiefs and warriors, PRO CO 5/66, London.

⁸⁶ Robbie Franklyn Ethridge, *Creek Country: the Creek Indians and their World*, (North Carolina 2003), p57, 143-145.

madmen Instigated by the Treacherous Emistisego, and for the sake of a few trifling presents – did wantonly fall on our warriors... Their women are now widows and their children fatherless & are now left to mourn the unhappy Event.⁸⁷

Although referring to violent incidents, Martin's location of women within this speech is quite specific. He twice uses the imagined or preferred dependent situation of Indian women as a means of control of recalcitrant Indian males, and ignores the relative self-sufficiency of women within a matrilineage. The loss of a husband or loved male relative would have been devastating, of course, but becoming a widow was certainly not a passport to female deprivation, and the phrasing of Martin's speech may have held little meaning for Creek men. In addition, the correct approach would have been to view children as 'uncle-less' rather than 'fatherless', and children were more likely to lose their Creek Indian 'legitimacy' and connection to the family and clan without their mothers.⁸⁸ For the British, and later the Americans, this continued categorisation of women as wives and dependents became a deliberate tool of the "civilisation" imperative and corresponded with the increasing tendency by Americans to assign Creek men the sole right to express tribal and cultural identity. Such directives implicitly recognised the extent of female authority by their explicit attempts to undermine it.

Sophia Durant, accustomed to public speaking, power, status and authority, represents a woman on the cusp of these changes as new gender ideals gained traction.⁸⁹ Bridging old and new worlds, she relinquished one Indian power to achieve another, accepted some advantages of 'civilised' life whilst rejecting less palatable ones, and traded absolute matrilineal values to incorporate beneficial American patriarchal practices. The world she occupied, however, had begun to restrict the arenas in which she – and other women – had operated throughout eighteenth century. Post American Revolution, the new American masculinity placed a premium on male ambition, independence and virility, which challenged the hierarchies and submissiveness of European societies.⁹⁰ This manliness required land for a man to farm, and a family to support his endeavours. He became master of his own fortune, challenged traditional authority and rejected his former community role in favour of a stronger public and political role. The job of moral policing and community

⁸⁷ John Martin Letterbooks 1782, Georgia Historical Society, MS543, 19th July 1782,

⁸⁸ Chekelli's Talk emphasised the lowly status of a "motherless child", 1735, MS143, 11th June, GHS,

⁸⁹ Pickett, *History of Alabama*, p127.

⁹⁰ Brian Steele analyses Jefferson's specific positioning of Indian women within the Republic, and Jefferson's criticisms of aristocratic hierarchies in Brian Steele, 'Thomas Jefferson's Gender Frontier', *The Journal of American History*, June 2008, Vol.95 No. 1.

values thus passed to women tasked with raising the next generation who were to embody such values. Ideally removed from physical labour, women were to restrain the excesses of masculine passions of anger and violence, and help develop these characteristics into virtues to advance the new republic. Whilst there was certainly room for Creek women to manoeuvre within these new power structures – and indeed they even took advantage of such ideals – the ‘new’ American man presented significant problems for Indian men. With the colonial powers ejected one by one from the eastern seaboard, only the Americans now remained and their idea of manliness clashed with that of the Creeks. Still preferring to hunt rather than farm, Creek men adhered to matrilineal principles that mandated extended periods from home for hunting, determined material and economic independence for women and allowed female authority over males, such as Durant’s, to continue. Paralleling these ideals, some Indian men became even more atavistic, demanding a return to the ‘old’ ways of Indian life. However, apportioning land for farming, its ‘correct’ use, with men at the head of the plough (and family), was key to American manliness and the new order of the Republic. Rejecting such values, many Creek men remained unconvinced by the benefits of such a society and by the end of the century, President George Washington had turned to Creek Indian Agent Benjamin Hawkins for assistance.⁹¹

Hawkins’s accounts managed to confirm Euro-American beliefs that the majority of Creek men were lazy and neglectful of their families.⁹² Although aiming to convert Indian men from absent hunters to dependable fathers, this was the least of Hawkins’s problems. His biggest challenge stemmed from the fact that civilisation could not be properly implemented until both women and Indian men agreed to the same basic socially-structuring principles. Even with full co-operation of Indian males, the search for a civilised, hegemonic masculine identity required *at least* the consent of women.⁹³ In addition, the hegemonic Indian feminine identity promoted by the Americans also required full co-operation from women that simply was not forthcoming: not all women were ready

⁹¹ Mary Beth Norton, *Liberty’s Daughters, The Revolutionary Experience of American Women*, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1996), p18. Hawkins’ role was also to help quell Creek-American tensions due to Washington’s concern over the Creek relationships with the Spanish and British traders in Spanish America. Kathryn Holland Braund, *Deerkins and Duffels, The Creek Indian Trade with Anglo-America, 1685-1815* (Nebraska 1993), p175.

⁹² Pickett, *History of Alabama*, chap XXV.

⁹³ “The public face of hegemonic masculinity is not necessarily what powerful men are, but what sustains their power and what large numbers of men are motivated to support. The notion of ‘hegemony’ generally implies a large measure of consent.” Bob Connell, *Hegemonic Masculinity*, pg 61, chapter 5 in *Gender: a Sociological Reader*, By Stevi Jackson, Sue Scott (eds) (London, New York 2002)

to subordinate their lives to their husbands.⁹⁴ In a speech to the Georgians in 1735, Creek chief Chekelli stressed certain organising elements of the Creek gender structure when discussing the ‘king’ and ‘queen’ of the Yamacraws, Tomochichi and Senawki, saying:

...For w^{ch} reason they look upon him as the father and Senauki the mother of them all and are all resolved that when he shall be dead to look upon Toanishon his nephew as Chief of them all in his stead.

He added that the he hoped the English would find “this place is good for them and their children and will always have straight hearts towards them.”⁹⁵ In this passage he refers to Senawki who was a member of the welcoming party when the British settlers first arrived in Savannah, greeting them as a dignitary and ambassador, and her parity with Tomochichi quite evident to those who saw her.⁹⁶ Chekelli afforded her parallel status to the king, which also reflected Creek creation myths that emphasised the importance of the independent feminine identity.⁹⁷ In addition, there was a clear separation between adults and children, placing women and men on an equal footing: not ‘men and women’, or ‘men and wives’ or even ‘men and families’. In other words, Chekelli’s speech implied balance of the sexes with children as ‘other’. The point may sound rather pedantic but the expressions of gendered status as early as 1735 show the roots of the enduring female adherence to independence, and makes a clear distinction as to concepts of dependency. Unlike the Creeks, Euro-American references to wives and dependents not only reflected patriarchal practices of the day, they also showed how deeply bound together male and female identities were. For Americans, the idea of a seemingly painless separation of male and female worlds may have been a little perplexing at best and downright unnatural at worst, and it was hard to fathom such disconnected female-male relations as being properly, socially and effectively functional. Indeed, a society where women could so easily assert – and practice – autonomy from men was hardly desirable, and the fluidity of the matriline offered no determinate structure for Americans to build a nation upon.

The arrangement of marriages to specially selected white men i.e. those who presented particular advantages for the clan, showed an unusual conflation of past and present social systems where the matrilineal privilege allowed patriarchal practices to gain traction. In the

⁹⁴ Brian Steele, ‘Thomas Jefferson’s Gender Frontier’, *The Journal of American History*, Vol.95 No. 1. (June 2008).

⁹⁵ Chekelli Talk, GHS, MS143, 11th June, 1735

⁹⁶ Diary of Peter Gordon 1732, Hargrett Library.

⁹⁷ Chekelli Talk, GHS, MS143, 11th June, 1735

longer term this would highlight gender divisions and eventually undermine female authority structures. However, in the latter half of the eighteenth century, tribal gender divisions lay not with the fact that women were abusing their matrilineal privilege but because the matriline still retained a purpose within civilisation and patriarchy whereas Indian males were fast losing their masculine expression. The female-male divisions were *enhanced* by the matriline, but the matriline and division of labour were by-products of the separation of fe/male identities, not the fundamental cause. This separation of identities is frequently confused with 'separate spheres' with all its attendant analytical set of values, and also overlooks the fact that 'separate spheres' ideology, as understood by Europeans and Americans, was premised on the implicit subordination of women.⁹⁸ It was built on a hierarchy of importance with a common goal of the family unit, and was a tool that bound the female identity to the male. Conversely, among the Creeks, identity was based on the performance of separate social roles that did not necessarily coincide with concerns of the opposite sex (as viewed in the exchange of secrets during war), and the forced alteration or elimination of such identities had the potential to be devastating for women.⁹⁹

Indian women did not necessarily view colonial changes to mean the forfeiture of one identity for another, and from their perspective white men had the potential to advance female authority. Some Indian men embraced change but for others "civilisation" often meant renouncing traditional values, causing significant fractures among fraternities as Nativist proponents pitted their arguments against more progressive tribesmen and against white men, too. As studies of the Nativist movement in the north show, it became harder for men to live harmoniously together and where feminine identities had evolved, masculinities became polarised.¹⁰⁰

The new Creek laws endowed women with power over white male sex offenders but, unaccustomed to asserting complete dominance over female sexuality, other Creek laws sought to compromise women's ability to interact and marry white men at all. Essentially, the laws allowed female agency to operate but within stricter parameters. For example, a white male undertaking work had to leave Creek territory as soon as work was completed,

⁹⁸ Kathryn E. Holland Braund, 'Guardians of Tradition and Handmaidens to Change: Women's Roles in Creek Economic and Social Life during the Eighteenth Century', *American Indian Quarterly*, Vol. 14, No.3 (Summer, 1990); Claudio Saunt, *A New Order of Things*, p140, 141.

⁹⁹ *Sexuality and Gender in Certain North American Tribes: the Case of the Cross-Gender Females*, Evelyn Blackwood, Signs, (Autumn 1984), p32.

¹⁰⁰ John Sugden, 'Early Pan-Indianism; Tecumseh's Tour of the Indian Country, 1811-1812', *American Indian Quarterly* Vol 10, No 4 autumn 1986, pp 273-304; Mancall, P. & Merrell, J. H., *American Encounters: Natives and Newcomers from European Contact to Indian Removal, 1500-1850* (New York, 2000).

and could only settle on Indian territory if he was actually married to a woman. Also, if a white man married but left the territory, his goods remained with his children for their maintenance.¹⁰¹ These laws certainly reflected fears of white male incursions onto Creek land and were designed to act as a deterrent to white men as much as protect women. However, the laws also restricted expressions of female identity that took them into the white man's world. This shift in policy sought to tie the woman's identity securely to her native kin, thus undermining her own ability to determine who was worthy of kinship status. In this way, women assumed a central rather than peripheral place in American and Indian ambitions, the control of their power as vital as the control over land.

The struggle to retain authority

It is easy to focus on masculinities when the record so heavily favoured their activities. However, it does provide many insights into the dialogue between Southeastern female authority and white patriarchal values; values that were utilised by both Creek men and women, even as they sought to reject them. The female body and sexuality were hijacked by competing authorities – Creek and American men – to express political discontent, and thus revealed an interesting juxtaposition of female constructed identities with degraded Indian masculinities. Both of these also showed further characterisations of female power, and the reader begins to see female power as something more ideological than practical. In other words, by viewing women through the crisis of masculinity, female authority begins to appear less like a set of self-determined ideals, and more like an interpretation of those ideals.

Benjamin Hawkins's description of observing "an Indian and his family" mirrored the contemporary views of the Euro-American family unit.¹⁰² The simple phrase altered the Indian woman's identity and permitted the male to represent himself as the embodiment of all things Indian, whether male, female or child. In fact, the evidence sometimes appeared to support these cultural constructs, and many Euro-Americans subsequently came to believe that Indian women had embraced this redefinition of their identity and willingly submitted to manly authority. On meeting trader Robert Grierson who had spent many years in Georgia, Hawkins was pleased to describe the man as owning "large possessions" and having loyal dependents including a Creek wife, with Grierson, of course, the

¹⁰¹ Creek Laws 41, 19. Hargrett, UGA. Law 19 did not allow for a white man to have an Indian wife outside Creek territory.

¹⁰² Hawkins, Letters, Nov 19 1796-May 21, 1797, Sat 28th Nov, *Collected Works*.

representative of his family.¹⁰³ Likewise, Mr Bailey, another settler, was notable for his good fortune and his wife who struck Hawkins as “economical, as careful of the family concern as a white woman”.¹⁰⁴

By the early nineteenth century, Nativists had begun to recognise the central role of women to furthering the political cause and assuring independence from white interference. Tenskwatawa, or The Prophet, brother of Tecumseh, was a Shawnee and leading figure in the drive to lead native people back to their traditional lifeways. In one of his speeches at the turn of the nineteenth century he blamed women for interbreeding with white men, directly associating female sexual behaviour with the ensuing dependency on white people.

Our women don't want to make fire without steel, or cook without iron, or sew without metal awls and needles, or fish without steel hooks. Some look in those mirrors all the time, and no longer teach their daughters to make leather or render bear oil... and so now a People who never had to beg for anything must beg for everything! Some of our women married white men, and made half-breeds.

This call was made across several Indian groups, including the Creeks, and asserted that part of the remedy lay in tighter controls of female behaviour, particularly that of women. Tenskwatawa added,

Any red woman who is living with a white man must return to her people, and must leave her children with the husband, so that all nations will be pure in their blood.¹⁰⁵

This called for quite radical acts on the women's behalf and assumed – or demanded – a deeper loyalty to the tribe over clan, asking them to relinquish any matrilineal benefits they may have gained from the relationship with their white husbands. Such a call would have applied to Durant's identity only a decade or two before, and seems absurd given her status – not to mention the potential difficulties in enforcing such a declaration. Tenskwatawa's call was also a challenge to white men as it declared their offspring to be inferior and disposable due the presence of Euro-American blood, some chiefs “chagrined and resentful

¹⁰³ Ibid.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid, Thu 15th, p80. Braund, *Deerksins and Duffels*, p181.

¹⁰⁵ Tenskwatawa's Criminal Code, in, D. E. Wilkins., *Documents of Native American Political Development: 1500s to 1933*, (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), c. 1805, p. 48-50.

at being ousted by the half blood”.¹⁰⁶ This declaration therefore undermined the female identity that had always validated a child purely by its mother’s lineage (in matrilineal).¹⁰⁷ Furthermore, it now offered legitimacy to offspring that came with the parentage that included the Indian *father*, which was a considerable distortion of tribal custom. Effectively, female heritage was no longer enough – it now required an Indian male to validate the product of the female’s sexual encounter. The insistence on ‘recalling’ women showed the continuing value women held for the unification of the tribes i.e. they had not been tainted by their liaisons with white men. However, the declaration was also an attempt to rein in their individual female proclivities and right to seek advancement in any manner they wished, and it was most certainly a form of sexual control.

In 1811 having joined his younger brother Tenskwata in the Pan-Indian movement, Tecumseh spoke to a large assembly of Creek, Cherokee and Choctaw. Described by one witness as an “austere” and “powerful” orator, Tecumseh echoed The Prophet’s call to reclaim Indian lands, commandeering the patriarchal practice of polarising feminine characteristics.

“Brethren of my mother, brush from your eyelids the sleep of slavery; once more strike for vengeance; once more for your country... Let the white race perish. They seize your land; they corrupt your women; they trample on the ashes of your dead!”

In his speech, women were positioned either as honourable mothers (such as his sister Tecumpease) or defiled, polluted and corrupted by contact with white men.¹⁰⁸ Appealing directly to men he invoked the past greatness of warriors using metaphors for lost Indian masculinity, pointing out their “blunted tomahawks”, “buried” arrows, and informing them, “your very blood is white” – a commentary on women’s sexual choices. Along with the return to manly greatness, Tecumseh assured them that admiring Indian maidens would once again sigh “for their embraces”. Such a statement assumed women had not already declared traditional Indian masculinities redundant, and redefined them to accommodate their own needs in a rapidly changing world. The use of gender constructs as tools for manly advancement were evident. Tecumseh first identified the matrilineal tradition – the origins of Indian brotherly virtue – to reassert manhood. He then demanded all-out war on the Americans, urging the warriors to destroy all property:

¹⁰⁶ John Terry to General Clarke, Nov 8, 1820, Treaty ground, Hargrett, Keith Read collection, Box 6, folder 20, UGA.

¹⁰⁷ Chekelli’s Talk, 11th June 1735, GHS, Savannah, GA, MS143.

¹⁰⁸ R. David Edmund, *The Shawnee Prophet* (University of Nebraska Press 1985), p29-30.

“They must be driven back...Burn their dwellings! Destroy their stock! Slay their wives and children! The Red Man owns the country”

Property, then, included women. When men rejected the “slavery” of the Americans, women would naturally be reclaimed along with Indian land, a mute, agency-less accompaniment to the violent reassertion of traditional values.¹⁰⁹ The speech from both men reflected their deteriorating relationship with elder sister, Tecumpease, who had formerly exercised authority. Married to a white trader, she had objected to the ban on mixed marriage and openly criticised their militancy.¹¹⁰ Despite the aggressive nature of the brothers’ speeches and the passive positioning of women, they nonetheless betrayed the acute crisis of masculinity where the loss of Indian women’s complementary roles resulted in a deep sense of loss and frustration for many men.

In these examples, the issue of female decision-making powers and her corresponding sexuality were incorporated into masculine concerns, both white and Indian. For Tenskwatawa, the sexual *act* of the woman (as opposed to the woman herself) became the key issue with the appropriation of the female body reflecting Indian male fears of the long-term consequences of intermarriage, which Tenskwatawa sought to rectify. The female body, then, assumed a shared vocabulary between Indian and white men, and became an accepted vehicle for expressing masculine disapproval and intent. In this way, women were viewed as one group that required control, and female sexual activity rather than individual contribution, became the means of measuring roles and tribal worth. Under this group identity, any woman of childbearing age became a potential threat, and the differences between a wealthy older matron still able to bear children, a traditional mother of two, a single woman and a young teenage girl became submerged beneath greater concerns. The fears also located the women firmly within the ‘mother’ role and excluded menopausal women and pre-pubescent girls from having the same value and power to alter tribal fates.¹¹¹ The declarations by men therefore reduced the vital component parts of

¹⁰⁹ J. Clairborne, *The Life and Times of Gen. Sam. Dale, the Mississippi Partisan* (1860), p51-60.

¹¹⁰ Stephen Warren, *The Shawnees and Their Neighbors, 1795-1870* (University of Illinois Press 2009) p80; David Edmunds, *The Shawnee Prophet* (University of Nebraska Press 1983), p144. Other matrons such as Nancy Ward continued to assert her authority with the Cherokee, urging them to avoid more land cessions in 1817. Perdue, *Cherokee Women*, p62, 101; Gretchen M. Bataille, *Native American Women, A Biography Dictionary* (New York, London 1993), p273; Waselkov, *A Conquering Spirit*, p167.

¹¹¹ Hawkins’s entertainment by the young daughter of the hunting couple showed the capability and confidence of some younger girls in positions of responsibility. The significance of young females can also be seen in the menstrual rituals and rites of passage as they sought spiritual powers and

female tribal customs and aided in the ideological dismantling of the matriline. Furthermore, by allying the physical female body with personhood, authority was crucially undermined and exposed to public discussion and criticism. The brothers may have sought to reject white, patriarchal values but they were certainly expressing them in gendered ways.

An overview from the start of the century to the end reveals that women who had traditionally worked the land also identified themselves in various other roles as shaman, council leaders, traders, mothers and matrons. Often assigned a single identity, few women in the historical record occupy such complex concepts of personhood but perhaps Sophia Durant comes close. She embodied the very nature of Indian womanhood expressing tribal authority in all of its complexity, neither categorised as one person or another.

As shown, although women still sought sustenance from their fields and gardens, those who were able to extend those lands and began to include cattle and other animals within enclosures, despite potential problems with theft and loss of revenue.¹¹² Women's cosmological identification with the land altered, of course, and the concept of 'production' took on much wider implications. No longer subsistence farming, land was also for cattle, cotton and other livestock. Other women were more restricted in available land, however, and by the time of Hawkins's arrival, many towns and their associated lands had become smaller. Some plots rarely produced enough food for a woman and her family, and women subsequently extended their skills to include more manufactures to boost finances to purchase food and other goods, offering opportunities for active engagement in colonial economy.¹¹³

In the Southeast, the absence of husbands on extended hunts often established women as sole providers for their children adding to the burden of childcare provision, whilst undermining the role and importance of adult males in children's lives. As hunts extended further and lasted longer, even the visible presence of males in towns was diminished except for elders or those who adopted cattle raising.¹¹⁴ At the other end of the social scale, women with particular status still utilised servants and slaves for financial advancement. Mary Musgrove, for example, was educated and literate, and did not appear to pick up a

engaged in sexual relations. Milo Milton Quaife (ed), *The Western Country in the 17th century; the Memoirs of Lamothe Cadillac and Pierre Lette* (Chicago 1947), p133-134.

¹¹² Hawkins, Letters, Friday 9th December; Monday 12th Dec., 1796, *Collected Works*, p29, 32; Braund, *Deerskins and Duffels*, p76-80.

¹¹³ Hawkins, Letters Sunday Dec 3, 1796, *Collected Works*, p23.

¹¹⁴ Hawkins, Letters Friday Dec 9, 1796, *Collected Works*, p30.

hoe in her lifetime yet her manipulation of matrilineal authority was very evident in achieving her financial and colonial status, acting as a valuable aid to General Ogelthorpe in negotiations with the Creeks. Furthermore, her marriages to white men such as her servant Jacob Matthews, John Musgrove and the Reverend Bosomworth allowed her to overcome a number of patriarchal practices that excluded full access to her rightful wealth based on her gender under colonial law.¹¹⁵ Sixty years later, Durant still reflected matrilineal entitlement as a wealthier, higher status 'colonial' woman, although this time with 80 slaves, a plantation under her control and a powerful younger brother within her clan. Although women such as Musgrove and Durant were far less prominent by the end of the century, evidence of female authority and ability to manipulate clan fortunes was still present into the nineteenth century.¹¹⁶

Perhaps the biggest change for women was the sheer volume of white men who moved into the Southeast over the century. Increasing numbers presented greater marital options for women, from the trader to the plantation owner, living within the town or outwith the town, tending matrilineal fields or fencing off farmland, adopting white names or maintaining traditional ties. Women married to white men appeared to abandon their authority but they often chose to flex their rights within a patriarchal marriage whilst keeping close connections with kinswomen, old and young.¹¹⁷ As towns reduced in size and women moved into more remote areas with their families, chances for daily contact with other women outside collective paid farming, weaving or spinning work were more limited. These women, therefore, remained conduits of kinship connections and employment for those who wished it, even if it was spinning rather than tilling, and extended their Euro-American households to include these authoritarian matrons. Such elder women, without the inclination to labour and who lacked the economic prowess of Durant and her sister, were certainly no burdens on society and they retained expectations of their clanswomen and men. Whilst contact with white men had its drawbacks, these women took advantage of opportunities often with an eye to their children's (and therefore clan) status and they subsequently adopted potentially useful skills. Whether this was education (as in Musgrove's case), spinning, language, or food-production talents, there was no evidence of conflict among women regarding their personal choices. This differed from men whose choices were limited to traditional masculinities versus concession to

¹¹⁵ Bataille, (ed), *Native American Women, A Biographical Dictionary*; Ben Marsh in *Gender, race and religion in the colonization of the Americas*, Nora E. Jaffary (ed), p. 47-52.

¹¹⁶ Waselkov, *A Conquering Spirit*, p36-40.

¹¹⁷ Many women married planter white men then used the labour requirements to gain positions for female relatives within the fields, such as the Cornells and Sally Waters. This retained their cosmological connections to the earth while earning a material return.

civilisation, a choice polarised by the rise of Nativism. Notable by their flexibility and accommodation of new customs, though, matrilineal societies were a means to expand the repertoire of female identities, and were able to withstand a great deal of change whilst retaining essential Indian feminine values.¹¹⁸

Women demonstrated repeatedly that their lives and identities operated far outside masculine concerns. Their speeches chastised and invoked warrior fury, and their council presence marked them as valued members of society who occupied equal status and authority. As conduits of life and death, as killers and mothers, their varied facets of authority all pointed to women who transformed throughout their lives. Just as men adopted new names with each significant event in their lives, women adopted several identities, all of which carried their own expressions of power that had the potential to significantly affect tribal fortunes.

Hawkins's tour allowed the presence of less visible Indian women to be felt for a moment in time, and despite some hiccoughs, modern historiography has devoted much space to redressing the historical imbalances that obscured the nature of female power, and it has been very successful in establishing women's cultural contributions in this regard. Some of the contributions could have serious consequences, as shown in this chapter, but attention to the finer details of women's lives and activities also illustrates that 'smaller' decisions (who lives or dies, naming of children, marriage choices, trade decisions etc.) were to have a significant impact over a longer period. It demonstrated that the power to permanently alter lifestyles did not depend solely on glorious battles and high-profile political decisions. Conversely, the study of women within these larger roles also shows that they were not all under a permanent obligation to devote themselves solely to men, children or peace. Identifying themselves variously as clan matrons, grandmothers, orators, shamen, planters, civilised housewives or independent-but-poor women, lifestyles were varied but were also linked by the appropriation of civilised values and patriarchal practices. In the Southeast, the matriline remained the organising feature of women's lives. It was validated by other women's acceptance and encouragement of different choices made to suit particular need or circumstance, and until a means to dismantle its effectiveness could be found, Hawkins was doomed to find stubbornness and resistance to his more patriarchal beliefs.¹¹⁹

¹¹⁸ Linda Stone offers a good overview of kinship structures in *Kinship and Gender, an Introduction* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1997).

¹¹⁹ Hawkins, Letters, Jan 23, *Collected Works*, p63.

The variety of features that had characterised the nature and identity of Indian women throughout the century were altered through succeeding wars, compounded by pressures that encouraged women to conform to a Euro-American lifestyle. However, the dislocations and disruptions to female lifestyle patterns also presented numerous choices to women already familiar with the elastic bonds of the matriline. As Indian men struggled to adapt to some of these changes, women began the slow process of carving out alternative expressions of power, seeking niches and purpose in the shifting social landscape. The civilisation drive that sought dependency and subordination from women unwittingly perpetuated and enhanced female autonomy and power whilst weakening the Indian male position, and adherence to both Indian and white male tradition now clashed with female values. The variety of new, post-war identities women presented did not complement Indian male endeavours as they had traditionally done, and remained unassimilable under Euro-American values. With tribal authority severely threatened and Americans eager to incorporate and tame their Indian neighbours, men sought to reassign female identities that placed them in one camp or another, either beholden to Indian or white, with both sides claiming control of women even as women asserted the opposite. As women had appropriated patriarchal principles to express their identities, men now began to appropriate women's identities and reshape them into tools to express *their* ambitions.

Many of the challenges to Indian power have been presented as something that affected Indian men far more than women.¹²⁰ Masculine-centred analysis will inevitably lead to that conclusion, of course, but the resulting narrative has often depicted women as recipients of a social system that offered an exchange of matrilineal authority for a place within accepted patriarchal ideals. The major events of the century, such as colonisation, the British control of Nova Scotia, the Expulsion of the Acadians (or Le Grand Dérangement), and the American Revolution, provided 'bookmarks' that showed what women had once been (according to observers) and what they were to become. However, focus on these events – and Indian men's history – has also obscured the fundamental process of change over time and the responsiveness of women who shaped themselves to their new environment.

The end of warfare had many implications for Indian men. But this chapter has shown that women also felt the changes keenly as war speeches, torture, violence, killing and opportunities for spiritual expression became transformed into more relevant and practical

¹²⁰ Michael D. Green, *The Politics of Indian Removal: Creek Government and Society in Crisis*, (Nebraska 1985).

actions. Using established power *structures* (if not the traditional manifestation of powers), they were successfully able to manoeuvre around many well-meaning restrictions whilst rejecting outright those that did not allow correct expressions of authority. For the Southeast at least, British, and later American, imperatives for change, put Indians on a social trajectory that unintentionally exacerbated the fractures in tribal gender identities. However, closer examination of female power within this process of change clearly shows that the notorious Indian male resistance to colonial endeavours was matched only by the extraordinary resilience and creativity of Native American women, matrons and mothers.

Conclusion

This dissertation has shown the spiritual and physical roles of Indian women in a violent world, and the ways in which violence informed Indian understanding of female power and authority. Although there were distinct regional variations between the indigenous communities of the north-eastern and south-eastern edges of colonial British North America, these societies had much in common. Uniquely female roles and attributes were nurtured and conditioned through the entire life-cycle, and in both societies white male visitors struggled to comprehend and explain the violence by female Indians. Using violence as a means of exploration not only subverts both contemporary and more recent historians' views of women, it also enhances understanding of them by reconfiguring violent acts as natural rather than deviant. Recent historiography has skilfully placed women in the forefront of the colonial narrative, recognising Indian female authority and violence as a part of native warfare, but this thesis established its significance for women alone. It is not about colonial warfare, and it is not about men, but rather its focus is women and their perceptions of power. Women's actions demonstrated a remarkably strong sense of identity that was buttressed by approving communities, testing many white observers' ideas of femininity and gender. As a component part of Indian female identities, this thesis presents ritual aggression as constructive and organised, a deeply meaningful expression of womanhood.

In meeting this challenge, much of the dissertation has involved interpreting the historical vacuum that lay between the recording of violence by white men, and how the meaning and significance of this violence were submerged beneath layers of white Euro-American gender ideologies. Such ideologies interpreted women's violence as superfluous, masculine, unnatural or an adjunct to male violence.¹ By dismissing the violence in this way, observers also concealed the concomitant powers that were associated with female violence. This thesis has sought to tease out the structures behind the violence, thus presenting it as practical and functional – perceived by native communities as having as much reason and significance as Indian male or white male violence. The authority that

¹ This topic is covered in detail by John D'Emilio and Estelle B Freedman, *Intimate Matters, a History of Sexuality in America*, (Chicago 1997). Women would also adopt roles such as 'deputy husband' in the absence of her husband, particularly for frontier wives who were often left for long periods when husbands left the homestead for work. Such women would assume male authority and relinquish it to the proper or appropriate male as and when occasion demanded. See also, Mary Beth Norton, *Liberty's Daughters, The Revolutionary Experience of American Women, 1750-1800* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1996), p110-114.

developed and supported aggressive behaviour was not reserved for violence alone. Instead, violence was simply one of many behaviours that utilised female-specific authority.

The culturally informed interpretation and application of colonial law to endow acts with moral worth allowed men to meet challenges to patriarchal authority with ‘reason,’ but in Indian communities beyond the reach of colonial law, the challenge to white masculinity was more acute. Without law to interpret and judge violence, Indian female actions – beyond the power of men – were perceived by white men to be threatening. What violence ultimately demonstrated was how easily western gender structures could fracture when faced with alternative expressions of female aggression. Often performed by supposedly sexual women, white observers were exposed to two strong, polarised gender categories that clashed horribly: was she masculine or feminine? Thus, ambiguity and contradictions permeate the literature. Young ‘temptresses’ devalued white male status whilst elevating their own. Others claimed paternal authority from white men, and wives offered temporary affection before dropping one husband in favour of another. For each woman who conformed to the identity prescribed for her by settler males, a dozen others presented evidence that those boundaries were malleable. A man may be a husband one day and turned over for torture the next. In the hands of women, white men found their familiar patriarchal power and authority was all but non-existent.

This brings us back to the underlying theme of the thesis. Women were ultimately conduits of transformation, spiritually bringing life and seeking death. Their transformation from babies to toddlers could be marked by their ability to hold a knife and engage with the enemy directly and physically. Acting as barometers of tribal intention, women assigned worth to white fathers of such children, and assessed the value of Euro-American names, education, and language. In many cases, these ‘concessions’ to white values advanced female authority. For example, Mary Musgrove’s language skills only served to make her a deeper thorn in the side of colonial Georgia authorities as they wrestled over land rights. From childhood to adolescence, girls’ bodies physically altered to prepare for pregnancy and their concomitant powers were found in the Huskanaw. It was in these early stages of a girl’s life that women’s authority saw public expression. Sexual choices helped assert her material independence, transforming the white male’s apparently insatiable sexual need into a convenient purpose. Usurping white male privilege continued throughout her life as her autonomy increased, with marriage providing another avenue of advancement. As shown by Sophia Durant, Mary Musgrove and others, the union between self-governing

women and white male worlds offered surprising opportunities that extended female authority. In this way, subverting patriarchal principles revealed its inherent weaknesses when operating in female domains.

Despite challenges that were expressed in female violence, many men did appear to accept that they had witnessed a different kind of woman. Although remarking on the presence of female chiefs among various nations, observers paid little heed to the importance of women in this role as they represented little threat to masculine propriety. It was not until the latter half of the eighteenth century that women began to feel their authority compromised. The act of consolidating American state power after the Revolution involved, at least in part, reassigning Indian female roles to align more favourably with the gender ideals of white American society. Once again, women faced with change transformed their authority into something that continued to have practical outcomes. Sophia Durant's daughter married into a white plantation family, for example.² Her marital choice would undoubtedly have pleased Benjamin Hawkins. As a woman who entered into her husband's home and family, she represented success of the American familial model, providing evidence that the civilisation imperative was entirely possible and that indigenous American populations were assimilable. However, despite Hawkins's labours, Indian women continued to usurp patriarchal values.³

Nonetheless, by the end of the eighteenth century the old scalp posts in the Southeast stood abandoned and unused.⁴ Captives were no longer tortured in the community as in previous decades, and that particular field of female expression ceased. Instead, peace was found in other ways. The prisoner assumed a new value, one of exchange.⁵ Such a political engagement combined a familial role with military needs, placing women at the centre of an important exchange process for Indian and white communities. Women were fully conversant with material exchange and the status it could achieve. As such, they were able to modify customs in a way that suited them, allowing autonomy to remain intact.

² G. A., Waselkov, *A Conquering Spirit, Fort Mims and the Redstick War of 1813-1814* (Tuscaloosa: The University of Alabama Press, 2006), p280.

³ H. T. Foster, (ed) *The Collected Works of Benjamin Hawkins, 1796-1810* (Tuscaloosa, London: The University of Alabama Press, 2003), p. vii. Hawkins describes several similar families such as the Griersons and Baileys.

⁴ Waselkov, Holland Braund, *William Bartram* p154; King, *The Memoirs of Lt. Henry Timberlake*, p120. Scalps were often hung out and dried for treatment. Others were suspended in the middle of the yard on posts as trophies and left until bleached and dry.

⁵ A. Loudon, *Loudon's Indian Narratives, A Selection of Some of the Most interesting Narratives of Outrages Committed by the Indians in their Wars, with the White People, Volume II* (Whitehall, 1811), p119.

Essentially, expressions of power altered but their underlying structures were somewhat stable well into the early nineteenth century.

As this dissertation has shown, violence provided a major purpose for women but its defining feature was the range of voices it gave to them. In almost every aspect of their lives women laid the groundwork for protection of the community and resistance to outside forces. The discreet and unassuming nature of often-small interactions belied their unyielding grasp and the immense difficulties Euro-Americans faced in detangling Indian power structures. Whether it was taking goods in a sexual exchange, establishing familial bonds that could not be easily broken, moving into wholesale farming or persistently making their voices heard, women often barred the path to complete colonial domination. It was not until the latter half of the eighteenth century that settlers were finally in a position to begin dismantling the lingering – yet tenacious – grip of women's authority.

In the century to follow, the native woman of the eighteenth century eastern seaboard quietly faded into the background as American attention turned towards westward expansion, forced Indian removal to reserved land and the impending Civil War of the nineteenth century. Despite the occasional visit by ethnologists who recognised their importance to indigenous cultures, women remained relatively mute in the historical record until recent decades. This thesis, then, has rearticulated their voices by providing a deeper context for female identities, raising the profile of their childhood and their elder years.

Indian-white bloodshed defined the nature of colonial settlement, and this dissertation has chosen to explore the very origins of Indian that aggression, demonstrating that children, so routinely overlooked, provide a crucial cipher in determining the meaning of violence. This aspect of Indian worlds contributes to the historical record by asserting that the systematic indoctrination of violence in children – especially girls – was a core cultural and spiritual value. In those tender years, they learned that each brutal action was imbued with deliberate intent. In this way, the deeds so luridly described in historical accounts, routinely used to denounce the 'savagery' of Indian cultures, are now endowed with meaning, purpose and significance.

The attention to children lays the foundation for helping understand the Indian woman at the other end of the life cycle, and this dissertation has reinstated elder matrons to their elevated positions in the record. A somewhat redundant status in colonial white eyes, I have charted the alteration of the matrons' authority and the circumstances that surrounded

their manipulations of female-endowed command. This thesis, then, has demonstrated how such resilient women were created, and the tremendous value they held within their nations. Ultimately, by examining the two extremes of the female life cycle, the range of expressions of power that existed in Indian society slowly emerge, from adolescent, hallucinogen-induced visions to pronouncements of death from the lips of a haggard mother. No single voice – male or female – dominated them all.

Despite immense pressures and the systematic dismantling of female status by Indian and white men, the very nature of the attacks on women at the end of the eighteenth century was an implicit and grudging acknowledgment of their influence. Nonetheless, their unrelenting refusal to alter their own code of behaviour best demonstrated that women's belief in female power and authority prevailed above all others. Indian warfare and struggles for supremacy may have shaped much of the colonial literature but it was female imperatives that lay at the root of Native American resistance.

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